



Best Practices

*Innovations & Solutions Developed by hunger
relief agencies in Washington State*



WASHINGTON
FOOD COALITION

20
YEAR
ANNIVERSARY

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Best Practices: Innovations & Solutions Developed by hunger relief agencies in Washington State

would not have been possible without the dedication and innovation of hundreds of emergency food providers across the State. Thank you for all for taking the time to talk with us and for your amazing work to fight hunger.

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Our History

Honoring those who have fought hunger in Washington for decades....

We not only strive to highlight the current innovations and solutions in of hunger relief agencies, but we also honor those that have done the hard work of building a foundation for a strong emergency food system.

In the early 1970's, several factors including the 'Boeing bust' and a nationwide energy crisis caused a hard-hitting recession throughout Washington. Families who had previously been self-sufficient were left without employment and without food on their shelves. In 1972, concerned neighbors in Washington began to grow discontent when seeing others in their community face hunger. Slowly but surely, groups rallied together in pockets of the state to set up local food banks. Some had begun organizing before this, and some would soon come after, but 1972 marks a year of remarkable activity in the formation of early food bank networks around the state. Organizations that began in 1972 include Puyallup Food Bank, Thurston County Food Bank, Bellingham Food Bank, and 2nd Harvest Inland Northwest.

The Washington State Legislature took a major step to fight hunger in 1985 when they formed the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) to provide funds to the developing food bank system. In 1992, this program expanded to also support the Tribal Voucher Food Program.

Incorporated in 1992, the WFC is the result of a merger between the Western Washington Food Coalition and Eastern Washington's Northwest Regional Food Network. Members of these independently incorporated organizations envisioned a comprehensive and cohesive statewide network. Their goal was to work cooperatively to alleviate hunger and provide a unified voice for hunger programs.

Since then, our work has been anything but light or easy. Varying economic times provide fluctuation in the strain our members face, but there has never been a season when they are not greatly needed. Our work is not confined to the traditional food bank, but we also represent all meal programs, distribution programs, and anyone fighting hunger in Washington.

Enough can not be said about the grueling work that was done by those who formed a statewide emergency food system, when nothing of the sort existed a few short decades ago. Washington Food Coalition is proud to continue the hard work of building on what they have accomplished.

The situations, interests, and needs of our agencies are diverse. However, we find complete unity in the belief that no one in Washington State should go hungry and we share in the vision of a strong emergency food system.

For those of us who now carry the work of feeding our hungry neighbors, and those who will soon join our work, we press on with optimism and the fortitude to continue until no one in Washington goes hungry any more.

...we continue the work of building a strong emergency food system.

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Introduction

Overview of Washington Food Coalition

Our Mission

The Washington Food Coalition actively educates and networks with organizations that strive to alleviate hunger throughout Washington

Our Vision

The Washington Food Coalition is the unified voice for a strong emergency food system

History

The Washington Food Coalition is a non-profit network of food banks, food pantries, food distribution centers, hot meal and food voucher programs throughout the state of Washington. Incorporated in 1992, the WFC is the result of a merger between the Western Washington Food Coalition and Eastern Washington's Northwest Regional Food Network. Members of these independently incorporated organizations envisioned a comprehensive and cohesive statewide network. Their goal was to work cooperatively to alleviate hunger and provide a unified voice for hunger programs. The WFC currently has a diverse membership of more than 300 independently incorporated agencies.

Project Overview

Recipes for Success was originally developed in 2007 as a part of a capacity building project initiated by the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP). Washington Food Coalition (WFC) won a competitive bid process to implement the project, which included a series of nine regional outreach meetings with emergency food providers around Washington State, numerous in-person and telephone interviews with individuals, an online survey of providers, and action research to discover and document some of the things that are working best in the provision of emergency food to hungry Washington residents.

In 2012, as part of the 20th Anniversary Year for Washington Food Coalition, it was decided to review, and update the manual in order to keep it current and as useful as possible. Julie Washburn,, Executive Director of the Washington Food Coalition, led this effort with the help of board members and various WFC members throughout the state. The 2012 Edition contains some of the same best practices as the 2007 edition, along with many updated ones and a large amount of new practices that have developed since 2007.

Goals of this Catalog

We hope this catalog will serve the following purposes:

- ...► Inspire emergency food programs across the state to innovate and adopt effective strategies to better address hunger in their communities
- ...► Recognize and celebrate programs that have developed and are already using best practices
- ...► Encourage dialogue and networking among providers to solve common problems and share successes for the benefit of all our communities Statewide
- ...► Provide community partners with ideas about the many ways they can get involved in fighting hunger
- ...► Educate funders and public officials about the issues emergency food programs face and some promising solutions that are worthy of investment

What are Recipes for Success?

Recipes for Success are best practices. A best practice is a good strategy for handling a challenge in your emergency food program's operations or service delivery. It solves a problem in a new way, and might be something other organizations could learn from or replicate.

Examples of best practices in emergency food might be:

- ...> An efficient way of taking inventory
- ...> Adjusting open hours to fit customers' schedules
- ...> A partnership with a local farmer to provide fresh food where there was a gap
- ...> A successful way of recruiting community volunteers

Some people object to the term “best practice” on the grounds that it is difficult to determine the very best approach, or that what is best in one circumstance may not be best in a different operating environment. However, we have chosen to use this term because it is the most widely used term to describe the types of ideas we have tried to identify. Other similar terms that might be equally appropriate are: good practice, better practice, effective strategy, great idea, solution, promising practice and innovative approach.

We are also trying to model best practice in the language that we use. Throughout the catalog, we have replaced the term “customer” with “customer”, “diner” or another term with positive connotations. This decision reflects our commitment to treating all people with respect, and supporting a shift in the way we think about food programs – from casting them as an emergency social service to believing they are an integral part of the fabric of the community.

Washington Food Coalition can be your link to the member agencies listed in this resource. Contact us to connect with these members if you have follow up questions or want more details.

A Starting Point

This catalog is not an exhaustive list of best practices, but a first step to build capacity among emergency food providers. These are good ideas and innovative approaches that were nominated by peers or came to our attention during the research period. In some cases, we were aware that several organizations were doing similar things, and have chosen to highlight a single example. An effort has been made to recognize and highlight the diversity present among emergency food providers, including geographic region, organization size and age, staffing levels, communities served, and type of program. We made a special effort to identify innovation taking place in more rural areas, in all volunteer organizations and in spite of other challenging circumstances. We hope that this catalog will jumpstart conversation about best practices and inspire our community to continue discussing what constitutes a best practice, and how we can best share knowledge among programs to promote high quality, responsive programs. WFC would be delighted to hear from you about the “best ideas we haven’t yet heard” and help to spread the word about them in the future.

How the Catalog is Organized:

Best practice profiles are organized into five major categories:

- ...> Food & Nutrition
- ...> Customer Service
- ...> Community Relations
- ...> Transportation
- ...> Organizational Strength & Capacity
- ...> Fresh Food Resources (NEW in 2012 Edition)

In each category, short summaries describe best practices related to that topic. We hope some of these short summaries will spark your interest in doing something differently in your program. In addition, we have highlighted a few issues of common interest through longer sidebar articles. In addition, to help you identify practices that may be particularly relevant to your type of program, we have coded each best practice using the following symbols:



FOOD BANKS



MEAL PROGRAMS



DISTRIBUTION CENTERS



SOMETHING EVERYONE CAN BORROW FROM



NEW ADDITIONS



UPDATED ENTRIES

Food & Nutrition

In the category of food, emergency food programs are striving to bring quality, high nutrition foods in sufficient quantities to hungry people in the community. These efforts vary from programs that access garden and farm produce to an emphasis on whole grains, low salt and unprocessed food offerings. Efforts of emergency food programs are getting the attention of funders and policy makers as well. As awareness builds regarding the food-related health disparities facing low-income people, such as elevated rates of obesity and diabetes, grantmakers and donors are expressing greater interest in ensuring that everyone in our community has equal access to fresh, healthy foods. The best practices below are organized into four categories: fresh and healthy options, responding to specific dietary needs, customer education, and increasing quantity, quality and variety. General best practices in the food area include:

- ...➤ Adjusting offerings for people with special diets or limited access to cooking facilities
- ...➤ Increased responsiveness to customers' cultural requirements, including offering staples sought by specific ethnic communities
- ...➤ Declining or limiting non-nutritive food offerings

Raising the Bar: Setting Higher Standards

Operation Sack Lunch - Seattle



Operation Sack Lunch (OSL) espouses the ideal that nutritional excellence should not be tied to economic status. Founder and Executive Director Beverly Graham says, “food has an immense amount of power in our lives from the moment we are born. When you are given food that is not quality, a feeling of unworth surrounds that. When we are working with a population that already has issues of being treated as if they don’t have worth, giving them food suitable for the trash sends the wrong message.”

OSL acts on their philosophy by buying organic whenever possible, doing a pesticide/herbicide wash on most foods, and prioritizing buying and serving fresh, quality produce at every meal. They offer a hot meal each day that includes fresh vegetables, fruit and salad greens. They don’t use food containing artificial coloring, preservatives, additives, sugar, or trans fats. The OSL kitchen uses environmentally friendly cleaning supplies and a Thermal Accelerated Nano Crystal Sanitation (TANCS) steamer system for sanitizing the kitchen.

What it Takes: According to Graham, programs seeking to move in the direction of healthy, quality foods need to be open to learning and shift their thinking to operate from a place of abundance rather than a scarcity mentality. “You need to be able to be gentle with your donors,” says Graham, “and be able to say: I appreciate that you brought a pallet of Twinkies®, but that’s not what we serve our customers. Do you have lettuce instead?” It’s a slow process of education, and it helps to be open to new learning yourself.

RESPONDING TO SPECIFIC DIETARY NEEDS

Just for You: Meals for People with Special Dietary Needs

Lifelong AIDS Alliance - Seattle



Lifelong AIDS Alliance (LLA) provides practical support services to people living with HIV/AIDS and other life-challenging illnesses. LLA’s meal program, Chicken Soup Brigade, is specifically designed to provide healthy meals and accommodate special diets. The food program manager and dietitian work together to design meals for 17 different types of diets, including allergy-free, heart healthy, renal failure, vegetarian, and special religious diets.

People are qualified and referred by case managers at agencies such as People of Color Against AIDS Network and the Northwest Kidney Center, and the referral includes a nutrition screening. If the customer is at high risk, they provide nutrition therapy. LLA purchases most ingredients for their meal program because of their customers’ compromised immune systems and the program’s elaborate menu planning. Another way in which LLA strives to meet its customers’ needs is by providing delivery to several satellite locations throughout King County. These delivery hubs are at locations such as churches and community centers. A volunteer receives the food delivery packed in cooler bags from LLA’s refrigerated delivery truck. They then hand out the meals during a 2-3 hour window of time.

What it Takes: To offer a special diet meal program, you have to be able to analyze the meals for nutrition content. Computer software is the easiest method. The first step is analyzing your regular meals, and then figuring out how to adapt them to meet special dietary requirements. LLA also hires skilled kitchen staff to ensure and maintain quality, although volunteers help with many tasks such as packaging, labeling and sorting meals. Developing a labeling system is also very important to avoid a customer receiving an incorrect meal.

Honoring Tradition: Culturally Appropriate Foods

Asian Counseling and Referral Service - Seattle



Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS) specializes in serving Asian Pacific Americans (APA), and their customers come from diverse backgrounds. Bilingual/bicultural staff and volunteers speak more than 30 different languages, so they are able to understand and provide appropriate assistance to their customers. The ACRS Food Bank distributes foods that meet APA's dietary needs including tofu, soy milk, ramen, fish and 3,200 pounds of rice each week. Because many of these items are not regularly available in the donation stream, ACRS purchases many of them. Culturally appropriate food is just one aspect of the ways in which ACRS works to meet the culturally-specific needs of customers.

ACRS also has a convenient location in Seattle's International District with bilingual/bicultural staff and volunteers to assist customers with language barriers. The organization also translates written materials into multiple languages. ACRS Aging and Adult Services Director Gary Tang comments, "The majority of our staff are APA, so we are familiar with the food choices of our customers." He adds, "Some time ago, we saw customers tossing foods out of their bags as they left — cheese, packaged food." They talked to these customers, who often said, "It's heavy for me to carry, and I won't use it." This led to changes such as moving to a supermarket-like arrangement that allows for customer choice, as well as changes to the food offerings. Through these changes, people feel respected, and they get appropriate foods. "We do need to ask our customers what they want, how can we do better," says Tang. "Running human services, we tend to give ourselves an excuse not to push ourselves to do more — we just say resources are limited. We have to ask the hard questions! Customers do their homework, and will move to the food bank that best meets their needs."

What it Takes: Tang advises that finding volunteers who are representative of the communities served helps dramatically with cultural competency. At ACRS, they have relationships with 14 different ethnic associations who send volunteers to help with food sorting and home delivery. Volunteers who are from the same culture or speak the same language as customers can help with collecting information from customers, as well as understanding their community's needs and preferences.

Reaching Out: Culturally Competent Groceries

Lifelong AIDS Alliance - Seattle



Lifelong AIDS Alliance (LLA), as part of their practical support services to people with living with HIV/AIDS and other life-challenging illnesses, offers a grocery program for customers who are healthy enough to cook for themselves. Groceries can be tailored to suit customers' medical needs (such as a "soft" bag for people with chewing difficulties), limited cooking capacity (low- and no-cook bags), and ethnic dietary preferences. They recently began offering an East African Grocery Bag, and a Latino grocery bag is planned for the future. Nicole Sievers, RD, CD, Nutrition Services Supervisor, sees the East African bag as an important way to connect with East Africans, a hard-to-reach population who may be hesitant to sign up for AIDS-related services. In trying to figure out how best to reach them, they thought "since our meals are not currently appropriate, maybe we can do something with our groceries." They created the

special bag by identifying a few key items that would appeal to East African immigrants. Working collaboratively with a local Ethiopian grocery store, they include injera (Ethiopian flatbread, a staple of the East African diet) and a few other ethnic specific ingredients. These few key items are supplemented with the usual fruits, vegetables and protein items. Just having a few ethnic-specific items seems to make a big difference. Slowly, via word of mouth, their East African customer base is growing.

What it Takes: An ability to identify community needs, relationships with individuals from the target group you wish to serve to help you identify appropriate foods, partnership with an ethnic grocery store or other source of culturally-specific foods.

“When you can get public and private agencies to come to the table, that’s when great things happen.” – Beverly Graham Founder & Executive Director Operation Sack Lunch

CUSTOMER EDUCATION

Be Your Own Celebrity Chef: Cooking Demonstrations Care & Share Food Bank - Grand Coulee



When staff at the Grand Coulee Area Care & Share Food Bank (CSFB) realized that many of their younger customers didn’t know how to cook, they decided to demonstrate how to cook commonly available items right on site during food bank hours. They advertised the demonstration to customers through flyers put in their food bags that listed upcoming events. The items cooked during the demonstration are included in customers’ bags that day, along with recipes. Care & Share focuses on the basics. Director Fern Blaylock says, “I even cooked a pot of pinto beans—45 minutes, they couldn’t believe it! I did it all on a hot plate.” The rice demonstration included basics of how to cook rice along with the chance to taste four different rice recipes: plain rice, fried rice, stir fry and rice pudding. The demonstrations took hold right away. People brought their friends, and demos attracted many people. CSFB received fewer returns of the demonstrated items as a result.

What it Takes: Doing demos requires a kitchen facility, or at minimum a hot plate, recipes for food currently available at the food bank, one or more volunteer chefs, and plates and utensils to allow food sampling. A nice extra is to give out cooking utensils such as measuring spoons to customers who need them. Blaylock recommends letting people know in advance what you will be cooking, and making your kick-off event especially nice. The chefs should have food handler’s permits. Check with your local health department if any other permits are necessary. This is a great chance for your volunteers to show off their cooking expertise and/or dramatic flair.

INCREASING QUANTITY, QUALITY AND VARIETY

Smart Shopping: Bulk Buying Committee Seattle Food Committee - Seattle



For the past 28 years, the Seattle Food Committee (SFC) has pooled funds to purchase foods in bulk for Seattle food banks. Seattle’s meal programs are also invited to participate with the committee to streamline ordering. The program is managed by an SFC committee supported by staff at Solid Ground’s Food Resources. Food Lifeline (FLL) provides a staff person who attends the meetings and acts as a buying agent. SFC decides on a percentage of funds that are put into a common pot and used to purchase high priority items which are then distributed to all eligible programs using an allocation formula. A special effort is made to maintain geographic diversity on the committee. Every year, SFC surveys members regarding their top three priority needs to help set the committee’s priorities. Protein items, including meats and eggs; milk, fresh produce and rice generally top the list. The committee sets limits of its funding, to purchase non-food items such as paper and plastic bags for repacking food. The committee then looks at funding available for the year, and starts making buying decisions. After many years, they have agreement on certain regular purchases, such as purchasing eggs around Easter and peanut butter and/or tuna fish to carry families through the summer. The committee meets monthly, monitoring spending and making additional purchasing decisions while sticking to identified priorities. “This is a way of being good stewards of our funding, stretching it as far as we can,” comments Trish Twomey. The only drawback she can find is that individual food banks can’t tailor their purchases. “We try to choose foods that have broad appeal, such as vegetables used across many cultural groups,” she notes.

Through this program, food banks are able to receive first rate product that is not dependent on the donation stream. The committee always purchases enough that each food bank has a sufficient supply of the item to last one week or two weeks for

distribution. Once decisions are made, FLL staff researches options and consults with committee leadership to get final approval on a purchase. The food is delivered to FLL's warehouse and is distributed from there (bulk purchasing info for Seattle food banks is even incorporated into FLL's online ordering system).

What it Takes: If starting a program like this in your community, the place to start would be your local food distributor. Ask them if they have the capacity to do the pass-through, store and distribute the purchased food. Also, expect to assist in overhead to help cover some of the lead agency's costs. Depending on capacity, choose appropriate purchases. For example, consider whether you can purchase perishables that require refrigeration. One place for a smaller community to start might be non-food items that all the programs need, such as plastic bags. Think about how you will organize yourselves and make decisions on behalf of the group.

Complimenting Donations: Purchasing Food

Northwest Harvest - Seattle



Purchasing food to supplement donated food has always been a practice of Northwest Harvest (NWH). "There is a limit to what is available through donations, especially when it comes to protein — it just isn't available. Our goal with purchasing is to offer a more varied menu and more nutritional items," says Bonnie Baker, Director, Hunger Response Network. Protein, rice, dried beans, pasta and tomato sauce are among the top items that NWH purchases for distribution. In order to decide what to purchase, NWH gets formal and informal input from member programs in a variety of ways. They hold regional meetings around the state in addition to their large annual meeting. In addition, they have a series of questions that they ask programs on the bottom of their monthly statistics form, including what trends they have observed, challenges and successes, and feedback on the product received from NWH. As

a result, says Baker, "We hear what people are short on." After assessing the needs, NWH begins the process of projecting donations for the coming year. Past information on donations broken down by nutritional category is used as a basis for creating a "shopping list." Purchasing is also influenced by where they can get good deals on large quantity purchases.

What it Takes: Of course, funds are the most critical factor to permit purchasing food. However, savvy buying depends on experience in food purchasing. NWH maintains contacts throughout the country and a lot of experience, which allows them to get excellent prices and the maximum benefit for their dollars.

Food Drives: You're in the Driver's Seat

Hood Canal Food Bank - Hood Canal



Hood Canal Food Bank (HCFB) targets specific items that are missing from their shelves, and gives out a list of these items to drive organizers such as churches and schools. "We need these extra items to fill our menu, so we started approaching people, and now they come to us for a list when they're ready to do something," says Kathy Roberson, Executive Director. They ask for things they can't get through the donation stream or discounted, such as large, hearty soups, Hamburger Helper® and chili. Roberson notes the importance of selecting items that match your customers' needs, whether ethnic or other dietary preferences. The drives give community members a chance to connect with the community via the food bank.

What it Takes: Many food banks have reported success with food-specific drives. Asking for specific items is educational for donors and makes them feel that their donation will make a difference. The only requirement is having a person familiar with current and anticipated stock make up a list to share with drive organizers of what is needed at that time.

“We need these extra items to fill our menu, so we started approaching people, and now they come to us for a list when they’re ready to do something,”

– Kathy Roberson, Executive Director Hood Canal Food Bank.

Creative Shopping (aka Extreme Couponing)

Good Cheer Food Bank - South Whidbey Island



The story begins with Ula Lewis. Ula who is a coupon shopper had a discussion, awhile back, with Damien Cortez the Good Cheer Food Bank Coordinator. Ula was getting some of her food for free and asked Damien if the food bank could use it! Damien saw the value of what she was doing and started giving Ula some funds; Good Cheer could use the savings and free food always comes in handy!

This is where the idea of creative shopping comes into play, it is “thinking outside of the box” as Damien would say. “We were dealing with a tough recession and some of our food resources were going elsewhere; our logistics needed to be rearranged” says Damien.

The creative buying program of using coupons continued to grow. Ula and friends would go to grocery stores with their coupons, purchase merchandise, stand in line to checkout and then do it again and again. The reason for doing the shopping over and over was because there were coupon limits.

Ula began to develop relationships with the store managers and this provided the food bank with a real bonus, coupons with no limits. She would make sure that she would not deplete any one store of their supply of product through her use of the coupons and I think this helped in her relationship building. Now they have a checker that works specifically with her or an associate to streamline the process!

Sharing the Surplus

Seattle's Union Gospel Mission - Seattle



A little over a year ago, we began to form relationships with companies that were able to provide us with large amounts of food and operating supplies on a regular basis. Some of the product was highly perishable and even though we serve over 1200 meals each day, we knew there would be more than we could use in a short period of time. We realized that a great deal of food would go to waste unless we found a way to share it with other organizations fighting hunger and homelessness. We had also observed that, like us, organizations such as yours received certain types of food on certain days of the week. Sometimes we miss out on needed product simply be the virtue of when our order date is. This led us to ask ourselves whether or not there might be an opportunity for us to fill in a gap by networking with some of the smaller non-profits whose focus is similar to ours. We knew we had surplus. We just needed to take a look at the possibilities for sharing it. The result is a distribution program that shares our surplus food, toiletries and operating supplies with a number of smaller non-profits that are focused on serving homeless and poverty level men, women & children of Seattle.

How could this program be replicated? Describe the planning and implementation steps you followed to put this project or program into place.

This program could be replicated by any organization that has built relationships that result in more product than they can use or product they receive that is not usable by their organization. We followed the following steps in putting our program together.

1. We realized that we would not be able to provide food to every non-profit that would like to receive it and that we were also responsible to our donors as to how their gifts were used. With that in mind we created an initial list of non-profits that shared a mission statement similar to ours or was already associated with the mission in some way.
2. The “partner” list, along with our request for permission to share excess product outside the mission was presented to our executive director for approval. This list has expanded by 20% in the last 9 months.
3. Once we received approval, we determined how much of the dairy product we currently received could be used by our programs within a specified period of time. We also looked at our toiletry usage to determine what the needs of our programs were.
4. We looked at our current staffing, operations schedule, and internal program shopping needs to determine what our opportunities and limitations would be in trying to share any surplus product we might have.
5. Our review really gave us the layout for our program:
 - i. We would need to send a list out on Wednesday afternoon with non-profits contacting us by email or phone with their orders.
 - ii. Participating non-profits would need to be able to pick up their orders.
 - iii. Pick-up appointments would be needed to ease congestion at the storehouse and the days for pick-up would need to be Thursday, Friday, and Monday.

General procedures were created and distributed to everyone on our list with a request for programs to contact us if they were interested in participating. Programs that contacted us became participants and several more have been added since we began the program last spring.

What were your program or project objectives? How do you measure success? What have your outcomes been? Our objectives were to share excess product that we received with other non-profits that are doing work similar to ours for the purpose of helping men, women, and children in need, form and build strong relationships with these non-profits, and cut down on the amount of food and other products going into our landfills.

We measure success in terms of the amount of waste we have to dispose of, the number of number of non-profits that continue to request product from us, the comfort the recipients have in calling us when they have a specific need to fill, and our comfort in calling them if we have a need. Because of this program;

- ...► We have experienced a large decrease in expenditures to dispose of spoiled food and non-food product that we are unable to use for one reason or another.
- ...► We are also finding that as we build relationships with our partners, they share with us when they have more than they can use of an item. We have received badly needed produce and seafood from partners whose donor base is different than ours. In turn, the agencies we partner with have no problem calling to ask if we have something they're looking for.
- ...► More food and toiletries are moving out into the community where they are needed. We provide 10-12 pallets of food to participating food banks each week. Toiletries are not offered every week. We average 2 -3 pallets each month.
- ...► We believe that our sense of stewardship is recognized by our donors. GIK donations have almost doubled over the same period for last year. A large percentage of this is food.
- ...► We are able to take large mixed donations because we know we have places to share what we can't use. This allows us to take more and that also allows us to give more. In addition to our partners, we are also able to more internally in terms of food baskets and support to area seniors.

We thought about cost and efficiency as we put our program together. Offerings are sent out after all of our internal programs have had an opportunity to take or reserve what they need for the coming week. We do not deliver product and that conserves fuel and manpower. Agencies need to place an order. There is no just showing up to pick up food. Agencies are asked to pick-up their order during the middle of the day when we are not in the process of loading or unloading our trucks.

Customer Service

Treating customers with dignity is a key best practice for emergency food providers. In speaking with food banks and meal programs around the state, many expressed the importance of having a strong customer service orientation and “good attitude,” and some talked about how their faith or values guide the way they do business. Many agencies have taken customer service beyond the basics as well, stretching themselves to make their services more accessible and convenient, more personalized, and more culturally competent. Others are going beyond food to provide other needed services. General best practices in the area of customer service are:

- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers treat customers with respect
- Maximizing customer choice through a shopping or self-select format or other mechanisms
- Listening to customer input and adapting services and food available to meet the specific needs of your customer base
- Recruiting volunteers from key demographic groups so that your volunteer base is reflective of the customers served
- Having good signage and clear guidelines for customers, available in multiple languages if needed
- Establishing hours of operations based on customer rather than volunteer convenience, such as weekend and evening hours for working individuals and families

The customer service profiles below are divided into the following categories: meeting customers where they are, increasing access and convenience, hospitality, beyond food, going the extra mile for kids, and more good ideas.

MEETING CUSTOMERS WHERE THEY ARE

Door to Door: Delivery Service St. Mary's Food Bank - Seattle



St. Mary's Food Bank (SMFB) offers a home delivery service for customers who are homebound. “We noticed with our walk-in customers coming in that some elderly and disabled people were struggling. Sometimes we would get a call from a case worker who knew someone who needed food,” says Kate Maughan, Food Bank Director. SMFB delivers to several hundred people each week, which Smith says is the “tip of the iceberg” in relation to need. The program is made possible by volunteers who agree to cover a route with a number of deliveries once a week, using their own cars to deliver the food. SMFB does background checks and sets the bar high regarding whom they send out, since customers are vulnerable and alone. The service is intended for people who cannot leave their homes without assistance. Customers self-identify as needing the service, and given the demand, they are always asked whether there is someone in their

lives who they can send to pick up their food. Once registered, customers are added to a delivery route.

SMFB has route sheets that they print every week. The volunteers see the same 10-12 people each week, so they get acquainted. In many cases, several customers are clustered in one building. They rely on volunteer drivers to assist with adjusting the contents of food bags to meet the special dietary needs of their customers – these restrictions are notated on the route sheet. SMFB delivers only once a week, so they bring a lot of groceries since they know customers can't get out. How long the route takes depends in part on how chatty the volunteers are, but usually 45 minutes to two hours. They need to balance visiting with the need to get perishable food out to folks, and may also vary the length of their visits depending on how isolated the customer is.

What it Takes: “This program is hard. You really need to have your ducks in a row because these people need their food every week. If you can’t do that, don’t start it.” says Maughan. Be prepared to screen and manage volunteers, and have a “Plan B” for when a volunteer is sick or on vacation. She also notes that people are needed to pack bags, handle logistics, and make volunteers feel appreciated. At SMFB, some people share routes, alternating weekly or monthly. In some cases, children ride along with their parents, seniors appreciate the children’s visits. It is very important to establish geographic parameters and limits on the number of customers served, although it can be difficult to say no to people in need. SMFB has benefited from a volunteer who created a customized Access database system for them. However, route assignments are determined by staff, and could be done using a simpler tracking system if needed.

TV Info Screens

Marysville Community Food Bank - Marysville



Marysville Community Food Bank utilizes a best practices that has to do with how they get information to our customers. They have a large flat panel TV screen visible to customers while they wait in line. They run a laptop in the office through that TV to run PowerPoint slides that provide food safety info, other resource info (like local places for clothes, medical, etc), thanks to our donors, what’s “hot” for food available at the food bank (“lots of onions today”), and many other types of info. Much of the info is available on flyers as well so that folks can take these for more details.

“I find that the slide shows are really helping to get information to our customers.”

– Dell Deierling, Director of Marysville Food Bank

Drive Through CSFP

Community Services of Moses Lake - Moses Lake



Community Services of Moses Lake (CSML) has designed a “drive-through” style distribution. This comes in response that most of their CSFP customers are elderly and it takes extra effort for them to park their car, walk to the food bank, get their distribution, and carry it back to their car (which in most cases would be with the assistance of one of the CSML staff). The whole process was very time-consuming for both the customers and the volunteers.

The drive-through distribution is set up with two lanes around the back of the warehouse organized using cones and signs. Customers will drive up, and two volunteers will approach them with the sign-in sheet, cheese, and the other CSFP commodities. Upon signing in, the commodities are then loaded into the customer’s vehicle. Taped to the

cheese is the next month’s distribution dates written in both English and Spanish. The customer then drives forward making way for the next customer to move forward.

Customer feedback has been extremely positive noting that the distribution for the elderly is far easier using this method. Results of this distribution process is that the customers never need to leave their vehicles, they never need to back up into a busy parking lot, and time is saved for both customers and volunteers. This method would also help the process for the

women, infants, and children participating in CSFP as it can be difficult for a parent to park the car, get all the children out, get everything, and bring all the children back.

Linkages: Pairing Fresh Meals with Groceries

Lifelong AIDS Alliance and Greenwood Food Bank - Seattle



Lifelong AIDS Alliance (LAA)'s food program, Chicken Soup Brigade, works to improve the nutritional health of people living with HIV/AIDS and other life-challenging illnesses. When they expanded their mission to include seniors, LLA teamed up with Seattle's Greenwood Food Bank (GFB), operated by Volunteers of American Western Washington, to deliver meals to homebound seniors in GFB's service area. LLA delivers packaged, frozen meals once a week to GFB. GFB then delivers the meals along with groceries to qualified customers (currently, about 10-15 people) at their homes. GFB helps identify people in need of meals, and also takes responsibility for completing intake paperwork for LLA and documenting the customers' nutritional needs. LLA cooks and packs quality meals and brings them to GFB weekly for distribution. This partnership works well for both organizations: LLA is able to send meals to seniors, and GFB is able to provide both groceries and meals (double the nutrition!) to their elderly, homebound customers. Mike Cox, Grocery/Delivery Coordinator of LLA comments, "It has been a benefit for us to show collaboration to our funders, a feather in both of our caps." LLA already had a satellite system for meal delivery, so this partnership was a natural extension.

What it Takes: Cox found it easy to establish this partnership — since he is active with the Seattle Food Committee, he already knew many food bank coordinators around the city. A formal memorandum of understanding between partners outlining roles and responsibilities is recommended.

"We believe that by giving food we would eat ourselves — nutritious and varied — we are helping our neighbors in need."

– WFC Emergency Food Provider Survey respondent

On the Road: Mobile Food Bank

St. Leo's Food Connection - Tacoma & Lakewood



St. Leo's Food Connection (SLFC) is expanding access through a mobile food bank. The mobile food bank started after the Lakewood Collaborative Hunger Task Force, a group of city officials, civic leaders and social service providers, identified three neighborhoods in Lakewood which were extremely low-income, and had significant transportation challenges and were without grocery stores. SLFC stepped up to serve one of the neighborhoods, Springbrook. "Because we already had a truck and we package food, this was a natural fit for us," commented Director Kevin Glackin-Coley. "The Hilltop neighborhood of Tacoma, where we are based, is gentrifying, so our customers are moving outside the center city. Now we have to go to them." St. Leo's Food Connection packages the food at their office, stores it temporarily at the Emergency Food Network, and transports it on Saturday to four different locations serving 125-150 households each week. SLFC divided the neighborhood into quadrants and picked four main intersections as mobile food bank sites, so customers wouldn't have to walk too far. Their truck, loaded with bags of food, pulls up to each corner at an appointed time and distributes food bags from out of the rear of the truck. They have made small changes to the schedule and procedures over time. "If we waited until we knew how to do it, we probably still wouldn't be doing it," says Glackin-Coley. "There are hungry people who aren't being served by the system as it currently exists. We are trying to think outside the box to reach them." They know the program is making a difference because they've heard from a local elementary school teacher who says she noticed a big difference for some of her students, who were no longer coming to school famished on Monday mornings.

What it Takes: A truck, good data about where emergency food is needed, partners (St. Leo's Food Connection works with Centro Latino volunteers for translation), flexibility of volunteers and staff.

DEFINING SERVICE WITH DIGNITY

Many food banks share a commitment to service with dignity. What do we really mean by that? Below are some “ingredients” to move us toward a shared definition, generated by participants in a conference session at the 2007 Food Lifeline Agency Conference.

- ...> Removal of barriers
- ...> Generous spirit
- ...> Increased customer/customer choice
- ...> Commitment to customer service
- ...> Personalization
- ...> Consideration and respect
- ...> Understanding
- ...> Valuing customers' time
- ...> Respect for privacy

Oregon Food Bank has taken the concept of a shared definition further and developed the following statement of “Customer Rights and Responsibilities” which is posted in all their member food banks.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES We recognize the basic rights of individuals who seek food assistance. Concern for personal dignity is of great importance. At the same time, staff and volunteers expect responsible behavior from you.

You can expect from us:

- ...> Respect, Consideration, Cooperation, Patience - Opportunity to participate in Surveys & Evaluations
- ...> Access to Services for which you are eligible - A Safe Environment
- ...> Personal information kept Confidential

Our expectations of you:

- ...> Respect, Consideration, Cooperation, Patience
- ...> Accurate Information to establish eligibility for services
- ...> A Safe Environment

Making it Easy: Satellite Food Banks

Thurston County Food Bank - Olympia



Thurston County Food Bank (TCFB) was motivated to establish satellite food banks in order to increase access. All the satellite programs they have established depend on partnerships with a hosting agency, and have been developed strategically to reduce known barriers to access. They have established 10 satellites so far, targeted to serve low-income families, seniors and geographically isolated communities. TCFB began its satellite program at two housing complexes with a high percentage of low-income families, working with the on-site after-school programs. This allows working parents to pick up

food once a month when they pick up their kids. Before, many of these parents had trouble making it to TCFB's downtown location during the workday. The next step was serving the frail elderly who have trouble traveling downtown and carrying their groceries home. By bringing food to two senior centers, the seniors have a comfortable place to wait for the food and for a "Dial a Lift" ride home afterward. Other goals of the satellites have been to extend hours of operation, providing evening and weekend food bank hours, and bringing food into geographically isolated communities.

TCFB offers satellites in partnership with host agencies that provide volunteers, a site, and reporting of program statistics. TCFB delivers food and offers technical assistance to get the satellite up and running. Partners benefit because they don't have to do food drives or package up bags of food. Basic bagged food is provided, and TCFB is glad to add on produce, bread or other items if the site has the capacity to receive, store and distribute the food. Customers are also still welcome to visit the downtown location to access a greater variety of foods.

What it Takes: Operating satellites requires selecting and recruiting appropriate partners. TCFB requires their satellites to be credible, able to track and report statistics, able to meet a high standard for volunteer screening, and to carry their own liability insurance. You must also have the ability to distribute food. Executive Director Robert Coit advises, "Don't roll out too fast! You will be successful, and you will need more food and resources to support the satellites. Be sure you can accommodate an increase in your customer base." Be strategic in your planning, and remember that your success hinges on the reputation of the host agencies. Think about your own capacity, and how to handle the logistics on your end. TCFB went "old school" with prepared grocery bags because they have the volunteer capacity to prep the bags, and can even pack them a few days ahead when there is a slow day. Finally, develop a clear, written memorandum of understanding between the two agencies. TCFB always requires such an agreement, and has developed written policies for the satellite program as well.

Getting Creative to Bridge the Gap on Customer Screening

The Vashon Maury Community Food Bank - Vashon



The Vashon Maury Community Food Bank launched a new program to bridge the limitations of State support agencies in reaching our community. There are no DSHS Offices or Public Health Service Offices in our community. People seeking help had to travel, by ferry, incurring what has increasingly become a very costly trip for low income folks, to sign up and qualify for even the most common governmental safety net programs. Oftentimes applicants were required to make multiple trips to a DSHS office to complete qualification requirements for their benefits or to maintain benefits. We embarked on an innovative collaboration with the nearest Public Health Office to provide ready access to at least the most basic governmental support programs right here in our community, without the costly trip. Our commitment was to recruit and work with a team of volunteers that would be present and available at all of our Food Bank distribution times. Public Health's commitment was to come out to our community to train these volunteers in taking people through applications for the State Basic Health and Basic Food programs to begin with, more being added to the repertoire over time. The Public Health Office we are working with has also committed to doing all the follow up with our applications, acting as strong and knowledgeable advocates for our customers. Through these efforts, members of our community, very much including but not limited to our customers, can finally access the help and support they qualify for without facing a huge financial and time burden to apply. We are able to educate and help people understand their ability to request phone interviews in lieu of DSHS office visits, and provide support for their application processes. For the first time, our customers can ask questions and find answers, right here at the food bank, as to whether they might qualify, and what kind of benefit amounts or costs they might be looking at. This accessibility is exactly what is needed to create the link between those in need and the resources available to help. Our success in launching this program makes a huge difference for our customers and our community.

We started with a dream. We wanted our customers to be able to sign up for basic programs they were not accessing due to transportation and cost of transportation out of our community to get to a DSHS office to go through the application processes. Our local public health nurse heard our dream. She worked with the Public Health office in White Center, and found someone who was willing to come out to us and train volunteers in taking people through the applications (for Basic Health, Basic Food, Medical Vouchers). Meanwhile we worked with our landlords to come up with an agreement to build out office space on-site that would accommodate not only our administrative needs, but this kind of program as well. Upon completion of the office space, we recruited a team of volunteers and scheduled a few 3 hour training sessions with the representative from Public

Health. Public Health supplied us all the forms, as well as release forms that would allow them to advocate and follow up for our customers as their applications went through the qualifying systems at DSHS. We wrote articles for our local papers announcing the new office space and new services available, with income guideline tables included. We worked with Public Health to come up with ideas for reaching out to our customers, educating them about what benefits they could qualify for, and that they could qualify without having to leave the Island. We continue to engage in outreach and education. And we continue to coordinate periodic trainings to keep our volunteers up to date to best help our food bank customers.

Our program objective was to create easier access to basic government assistance programs for our customers right here at the food bank. The only real choice prior to this program for our customers, and our community, involved a \$15-\$19 ferry trip to a DSHS office in Seattle. We wanted to create a friendly and open atmosphere, matching that in our food bank distribution, in which one can openly ask questions and get answers about qualifying, applying and even going through the application process right here, with help. We wanted a private enough setting for working with people's personal financial and family information in a comfortably confidential manner. We wanted volunteers trained to handle all inquiries so that we are not diverting our limited staff from all their regular duties which keep the Food Bank running optimally. We live in a small community where person to person, face to face outreach can make all the difference in program interest and participation. Numbers were not as important to us, as we know for many of our customers, trust and familiarity is a prerequisite for sharing private information, and that takes time. We have however taken at least one person, per distribution day, on average, through the complete application process for either Basic Health, Basic Food, or both. We have provided many more with answers to questions or applications to take home and complete. We continue to look at and fine tune our outreach, making sure that our customers, and the community, know this program is here, at our Food Bank, and available, especially during these tough times. We feel that our efforts have been successful. We have achieved our goals and are always, as with every program here at the Food Bank, fine tuning at every step to continue to improve our services for our customers.

Our outreach program helps people of our community who are already struggling, many of whom are already using the food bank. Their limited resources are slipping away just trying to cover the very basics each month. Nutrition becomes a secondary choice to eating cheaply, and Health Care is relegated to emergencies only. Helping get people on the Basic Health program, those that qualify, at least can get preventative care when and as needed. Helping people access Basic Food helps people in our community stretch their dollars just that little bit farther to access enough food, or more nutritional food in an economy where food prices have skyrocketed, and in a community where traveling to a Costco or Trader Joe's is cost prohibitive. With the new Basic Food program income guidelines, our customers' children are getting enrolled in the free school lunch program, one that has been severely underutilized in our community, and one that can help many families provide the nutrition their growing children need right now to become all they can be. This program helps our customers take care of themselves, enables them to make positive choices for the health and nutrition of themselves and their families, while helping stretch their limited dollars further each month.

What It Takes: From the beginning we knew that we had limited resources if any to make this program happen. It has been a miracle of collaborations that has made it all possible. We were in a situation that demanded that we build or somehow acquire adequate office and filing space for our simple administrative needs. It made sense, if at all possible, to come up with a solution that would also allow us to start a program facilitating outreach to other services as the need has been so great, and access so limited, for our food bank customers. If ever we were going to achieve this goal, now, while we were securing basic office space, was the time. The successful collaboration with our landlords and a local contractor gave us the space we needed, and the space we dreamed of. We were very clear from the start that we did not have the budget to support staff carrying out this program. Again, this is where collaboration made it all possible. DSHS offices tend not to have the staffing ability to commit someone to being at our facility, and even Public Health couldn't commit someone. However, Public Health was willing to send someone out to us to train people. And, they were willing to commit to all the follow up with our customers. We could easily recruit a team of volunteers eager and willing to learn the ins and outs of what can be pretty harrowing forms, in the name of helping others in our community. Thus, with little expenditure of agency resources and time outside of our normal routines, we were able to institute a new program, one that creates access to government assistance programs and engages in outreach where there had been none, not just at our Food Bank, but in our community. We created not only an asset, a resource for our customers, but one for our community as well.

Excellence is stepping up in the best way one can to help our community. Through our collaborations, we have provided a readily accessible avenue to reach government assistance programs that otherwise had been cost prohibitive and inaccessible due to transportation limitations. These programs help people ride out hard times. These programs were designed as an important safety net for our society. No food bank can cover all the needs of all their customers. As a food bank we do the best we can to provide basic food supplies, but we don't, and cannot have everything. We can however put people in touch with other resources

that are available, that can supplement what we are able to provide every week. We saw a flaw, a hole in the safety net that is supposed to be there for us, for our community. We worked together with our community and other agencies to repair that hole, provide more comprehensive help to our customers, and to make our community a better place because of it.

INCREASING ACCESS AND CONVENIENCE

Eliminating the Line: Appointments

Hopelink - Redmond



Hopelink assigns its food bank customers specific appointment times to reduce customer wait time. This gives customers a specific time to aim for so they spend less time waiting for service, and it alleviates parking problems as well. Appointments are scheduled at 15 minute intervals, and the number given out is based on their calculation of how many families they can serve in each fifteen minute period. They have a lottery style system so people aren't always stuck with the last appointment and the system is perceived as fair. Each week when a customer visits, either they or a staff members draw a slip of paper for them that lists the food bank location, appointment date and time for the following week. The customer holds onto the slip, which serves as proof that they have an appointment. People without appointments and new customers can come through during the last fifteen minutes of open hours. "It works for us," comments Teresa Andrade, Food Bank Coordinator, Kirkland/Northshore Hopelink. "It takes the strain off of the customers. No matter what you say about having enough for everyone, people still have the mentality that they need to get in first. This makes it workable." She observes that this system is inherently less flexible, and Hopelink has developed guidelines for specific exceptions. Each food bank adopting an appointment system might have different exceptions depending on the community served.

What it Takes: First, decide to make a change and explain the upcoming change to customers (better yet—ask them if they feel appointments would be beneficial). Set up a template for printing slips (Hopelink uses a Microsoft Word label template to create slips each week with the correct date). Think through what your policies will be for people who lose their slips and under what circumstances you might make exceptions to the system. Train volunteers regarding the change and the rationale.

What's Cookin': Resource Hotline

Anti-Hunger Coalition Whatcom County - Bellingham



Everyday, Tutu Iverson, Board Vice President of Bellingham Community Meal (BCM), updates a Community Voice Mail (CVM) box message with information about which food banks are open and where to find free meals that day as part of her work with Whatcom County's Anti-Hunger Coalition. Food banks and meal programs send updates on their open hours, and she also reaches out to them to make sure the information she puts out is accurate. The coalition advertises their resource line via a card and inclusion in a resource guide. Social service providers have been especially appreciative of having a number to give customers.

What it Takes: Iverson says maintaining the voicemail is "not a lot of work, but you have to keep it up all the time." She has even called in while out of town to do daily updates of the information. At this point, her basic script is memorized. Interns or student volunteers could also be involved in updating the messages, or it could be done in various languages if volunteer interpreters are available. Of course, the most basic requirement is to set up a voicemail box. These are available from the phone company, or free of charge through your local Community Voice Mail provider or from several online services. To hear today's message, dial 360-788-7EAT.

No Questions Asked: Self-Serve Food

Helpline House - Bainbridge Island



Bainbridge Island's Helpline House (HH) offers a variety of community services, including a food bank, a clothing bank, a medical equipment loan program, and counseling. One reception lobby serves all the programs, and HH has installed bread racks, a display freezer and refrigerator in the lobby area. This allows all customers – even those visiting another program – to access food, and there is no limit on the number of visits. The refrigerator features fresh produce donations from the grocery store and their community garden. Marilyn Gremse, Volunteer Manager, comments, “We have produce that comes in and we need to move it right away. This way, it's on view, people see it, and they take it.” They also use the front fridge and freezer for bulk things, like specialty flavors of ice cream, that people wouldn't think to ask for. Having this accessible food helps serve people with dignity, and they are finding that even people reluctant to use a food bank may come and access the front area. Check-in is needed to access the food bank.

What it Takes: Space in the waiting area, display refrigeration and/or freezer. HH's lobby is monitored by a volunteer at the check-in desk.

Resource Access Project

Resource Access Project (RAP)



Connecting customers with a social services professional to increase access to referrals and information

Food Banks are often the first place people turn to when they are in need. Increasing access to information and referral is one important step to improving stability in our customer's lives. The Resource Access Project (RAP) is a brief focused intervention to provide access specific resources regarding customer needs such as state food assistance, housing stability, referrals to health clinics, legal support, or to address any other need. Food Bank visitors are able to meet with a staff person without needing to make an appointment during food bank hours.

Participants are given specific resource information to address a problem, provided directions or phone contact for the resource, bus tickets if needed to make the trip, and a follow-up visit is encouraged. As an incentive, Food Bank customers can access the Food Bank an “extra” visit if they participate in a follow up visit or call. The follow-up visit is important as it provides helpful feedback for evaluation of the project. Those standing in our Food Bank line have more needs than food. While we may not be able to provide the financial resources needed, we might be able to provide one more idea or one more resource that someone did not previously know about. By offering this one-to-one service we can provide the Information and Referral (I&R) and support a customer may need to achieve greater stability.

What is Takes:

RAP has three basic components; recruitment, space and a social services professional.

1. We have found it very helpful to have an intern or trained volunteer speak with customers in line and screen them for RAP. Volunteers and interns increase the visibility of the program.
2. A private meeting space with convenient access to the Food Bank distribution area ensures that customers' privacy is maintained.
3. A case manager blocks off time for each food bank shift to be available for RAP.

The project requires a skilled staff (or volunteer) who can set boundaries and focus on the task of providing necessary and useful information.

HOSPITALITY

Redefining the Food Bank: Adding Services

My Sister's Pantry - Tacoma



My Sister's Pantry (MSP) serves up a hot meal and provides groceries and clothing to low-income community members three times a month, working out of First Congregational Church in Tacoma until their new home at First Methodist is complete. They serve on average 250-300 families per month representing 1,000-1,500 individuals. The vision to provide a quality meal experience came from their founder, a woman who had been in need of the food bank at one time in her life, and felt there was no dignity for the people in line. Instead, she wanted the MSP experience to be like going to a friend's house for dinner. On entry, people can receive a number for service at the food bank and/or clothing bank. Then, they receive a meal. All services are provided during a two hour period.

The meal is served on dishes, with silverware and tablecloths on the tables. People eat family style at large tables. About half of the people served are Eastern European, and many families dine together. The food is generally cooked by professional chefs who donate their time. "A local restaurant owner comes with his family and co-workers," says Martha Curwen, Executive Director. "We jokingly call it Iron Chef Pantry — they don't know what they are cooking in advance, but come in on Monday afternoons and prepare everything (using donated and purchased food). Because of his commitment, I have had other cooks approach me, and they either handle Saturdays or substitute as needed on Mondays." The experience is almost like dining at a restaurant — without the bill. Diners often take an interest in the meal and ask for recipes, so it shows them what they can do with the food from the food bank. MSP makes an effort to offer things that can easily be made with food bank items, for example, a salsa made with canned corn, black beans, diced tomatoes, and onions, served at a sample table with chips.

The food bank asks customers to fill out a grocery list indicating items they would like to take home — the list is printed with English and Russian side by side. These lists are used by a corps of volunteers who bag up food while people are eating, in the order indicated by their assigned number. Customers can also visit a produce and bread station while they are there. Clothing bank customers enter a designated area, arranged like a clothing store, and have 10 minutes to choose 10 items.

What it Takes: Curwen stresses that MSP has chosen their hours to accommodate the individuals and families served — evenings and weekends. She recommends assessing the customers' needs and planning around this. The operation is very volunteer intensive, utilizing 40-50 volunteers each time they are open. She draws heavily on church groups, college and high school students. Naturally, a facility with a kitchen, dining space, and room to accommodate the food bank and any other activities is needed as well.

Taking Hospitality to a New Level: Offering Take-Out

Women's & Children's Free Restaurant - Spokane



By its very name, the Women's & Children's Free Restaurant (WCFR) strives to set itself apart from a standard soup kitchen. While they did serve soup in their early years beginning in 1988, they have always placed an equal importance on hospitality. WCFR provides two made-from-scratch dinners each week in the basement of St. Paul's United Methodist Church. Since 2000, WCFR has been led by Executive Director Marlene Alford, a former caterer. In March 2004, to better meet the needs of families and provide something for the weekend when they were closed, they added Friday Take-Out. While Alford and her Board first thought they were just going to do another entrée, Friday Take-Out has become much more. In addition to offering an entrée to serve at least two, WCFR sets up a small "farmers market" with produce, bread, and a limited selection of dairy items — and serves lunch beginning at 12:30 p.m. A crew of volunteers spends Friday morning getting ready to open their "market" at 1 p.m. Before opening they make up the day's shopping list to distribute to their diners. "We would never choose for them," says Alford. Upon entering the program on Friday afternoons, the women are handed the shopping list of available items for their review and selection.

WCFR staff and volunteers work to think of everything, including portioning salad dressings from commercial size jars or washing and cutting whole watermelon to ensure that there's enough to go around and that diners can carry it home. They've also been adding recipes and continue to build their nutrition education resources.

What it Takes: Alford's food service industry experience has been valuable in launching the take-out service. To offer meals to go, you'll need to pursue a Class II Complex license from the health department. After that Alford acknowledges that you'll need a "huge amount of creativeness," food service knowledge, and the ability to be flexible, recognizing the ever-changing donation stream.

BEYOND FOOD

The Doctor's In: On-site Health Clinic North Helpline - Seattle



North Helpline (NH) started as a call-in/drop-in resource center. They started the Lake City Food Bank in 2001, precipitated by a crisis when a food bank in a neighboring community outside the city limits said it would no longer be able to serve Seattle residents (North Helpline was referring its customers there). Now, Lake City Food Bank serves 1,000 people per week. Many food bank customers present with medical needs, and NH knew that most were using the emergency room at nearby Northwest Hospital & Medical Center as their primary care provider. NH had been working with Rotary and learned about RotaCare Clinics. They worked hard to bring the program to Lake City, partnering with Rotary and the hospital as a source of volunteer medical personnel and back-up for urgent care. NH now has a clinic on-site that is open Saturdays, with two exams rooms, a triage area and a pharmacy. A mobile dental van also visits monthly. The hospital is supportive because without the clinic present, they would see many of these patients in their emergency room at an increased cost. Bartell Drugs provides prescription drugs at cost to NH, who passes them on free of charge to patients. Executive Director Rita Anderson comments, "It's cheap insurance to support our programs. No one knows when they may need assistance."

What it Takes: Anderson advises making the connections and doing the legwork beforehand. Make sure you have partners, because it takes a lot of money and effort to operate a clinic. NH fundraises for the project, has received equipment donations, and engaged skilled medical volunteers. The clinic has been a welcome addition to the community.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE FOR KIDS

Bringing it Home: Backpack Meals Des Moines Area Food Bank - Des Moines



The Des Moines Area Food Bank (DMAFB) started their Backpack Project to meet the needs of low-income children and their families. Children identified by the school administrators as at risk of weekend hunger are provided with backpacks of food to take home each Friday. DMAFB started the program when they realized that 60% of area children qualified for free and reduced lunch, and that the income guidelines for that program are the same as the guidelines for receiving USDA commodities. They began a partnership with Midway Elementary in Des Moines and have now expanded to serve six local schools as well, distributing about 400 backpacks each week. Kids take home full backpacks from school on Friday and return them on Monday – or, being kids, Tuesday. DMAFB volunteers pickup the backpacks from the school, refill them and deliver them back to the school by Friday. Two days worth of foods geared to kids is provided such as instant oatmeal or a breakfast bar with fruit for breakfast, microwavable macaroni and cheese or chili with chips, a cookie and juice for lunch and something similar for dinner, plus one or two snack items per day. They pay attention to nutritional density as much as possible. In order to offer appropriate foods, DMAFB does purchase some items, primarily single serve main meals, juice and fruit.

What it Takes: Backpacks, preferably ones that won't make the kids noticeable (DMAFB received a donation of a large number of backpacks from Washington Mutual), people to sort food and fill backpacks with appropriate food items, funds to purchase some items that are needed that may not be available regularly through the donation stream.

More than a Meal: Recognizing Other Needs

Sky Valley Food Bank - Monroe



Sky Valley Food Bank (SVFB) has expanded their services to include back-to-school supplies for kids as well as toys during the holiday season. They conduct a community drive that brings in donations and also increases their community visibility, stressing that supplies will go to the community's neediest children. Their goal is to provide the school supplies prior to school starting, so the children are able to fit in and be confident like the other children that have more resources on the first day of school. Supplies collected match school requirements, and are organized at the food bank by grade level. Neil Watkins, Executive Director, says, "If the parents can't even afford food, how can they get them through school? Items are expensive! If they are in need of food, they're also probably really worried, concerned and stressed about school supplies and toys for Christmas. Those are the two programs we chose to add for our

families in need, and they are both feel-good programs for the community as well." He adds, "The additional programs make your food bank look extensive. It can seem cumbersome when added to everything else, but it's such a great public relations tool as well as making a difference in the lives of people."

What it Takes: One or more volunteers will need to organize supplies by grade, and designated gifts will need to be tracked for the program. The drive is run by soliciting community partners such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Fire Department, Rotary Club and local businesses. Cash donations are used to buy backpacks or fill gaps in supplies. Before getting started, make sure your staff, board and volunteers support the effort.

"The additional programs make your food bank look extensive. It can seem cumbersome when added to everything else, but it's such a great public relations tool as well as making a difference in the lives of people."

– Neil Watkins, Executive Director Sky Valley Food Bank

It's in the Bag! Making Celebrations Possible

Maltby Food Bank - Maltby



Knowing that children's birthdays can be expensive for parents, Maltby Food Bank (MFB) decided to start offering child's birthday bags to families. A typical bag contains cake mix, frosting, birthday candles, disposable plates and napkins, and party favors. Gender appropriate bags are available for boys and girls. Donations of party goods are solicited from community groups. So far, Scouts, 4-H clubs, bible study groups and schools have assembled and donated bags. MFB is currently well-stocked as the local Montessori school recently donated 60 bags. The bags have been a big hit with customers, who indicate that they may have been

unable to throw a party without the assistance. Fran Walster, Director, indicates that she started the program primarily because “I needed an idea to get the community to help us. People want to help, they just don’t know how. Once you tell them how to give, they’re willing.” She also has groups that assemble and donate gift bags for seniors with toiletries and gift cards.

What it Takes: This is an excellent community service project for a service club, scout troop or other outside group looking to make a specific contribution to your food bank. MFB publicizes the need, offers basic guidelines, and donors do the rest.

Beyond the Box: Summer Meal Program

Copalis Community Church Food Bank - Copalis Beach



Ten years ago, Copalis Community Church Food Bank (CCCFB) saw the need for a summer free lunch program in their community. They applied to OSPI (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction) to become a sponsor for the Summer Feeding Program (In Washington State, OSPI is the state agency that administers the federal money from USDA for this program). After operating at a single site in the first year, the program has expanded each year and now serves over 8,960 lunches each summer all over the north beach community. Meals are served at fourteen sites, including the school district’s summer reading program, parks and recreation programs, and central community locations. Recently, the program was expanded to include three mobile sites at places where low-income children are concentrated. “The mobile program is our shining star,” comments former Board Co-Chairman Phyllis Shaughnessy. “We look for pockets of kids, like a modular home park, set out portable picnic tables and serve lunch. We’ve even incorporated a reading program where we take books and give them to the kids.” Shaughnessy reports that a faithful group of volunteers keep the program running. She also notes that it makes sense to have a food bank involved in this program, since they can use food from the food bank to lower the cost of making the lunches. Food banks considering running a similar program are invited to visit Copalis to see this operation in action. “It is something to behold. We deliver to many sites each day, and it goes like machine work.”

What it Takes: Startup funding to cover the costs of food until USDA reimbursement is received (CCCFB gets theirs from individuals and the county), volunteers to prepare and deliver sack lunches, a kitchen space for food preparation (they use their church kitchen), and a strong organizer to get out in public and encourage interest.

Beyond the Box, Take 2: Summer Lunch Camp

South Kitsap Helpline - Port Orchard



The South Kitsap Helpline (SKH)’s Summer Lunch Camp began in the summer of 2006 as an alternative to USDA’s Summer Feeding Program. This free, drop-in lunch program is designed to assist low-income families in the community in need of additional help feeding their children in the summer when free and reduced price meals are not offered because school is not in session. Children from pre-school to age 18 are invited to attend and receive a nutritious lunch and snack three days per week. If children are unable to stay, they pack lunches for them to take home. Extra food is also sent home with the children on Fridays for weekend meals. Parents are invited to stay with the children, or take a two-hour break for themselves. In addition to receiving food, children socialize, participate in an arts and craft project, read books, play games and receive one-on-one attention from staff and volunteers. SKH worked to create a summer camp atmosphere with “lunch camp counselors” who take kids’ orders. During the first year, the Summer Lunch Camp operated all summer long on a budget of just \$3,000.

What it Takes: Reliable group of staff and volunteers, building space during lunchtime hours, and lunches. SKH was able to partner with the First Lutheran Church who provided space in their centrally located church, which also had an appropriate kitchen space for meal preparation. When the program started, SKH did significant community outreach through the local schools, their food bank, posters at local community centers, laundromats and other community gathering places, and press releases to the local newspapers. They created parental consent/emergency contact forms, medical treatment and liability release forms and basic rules for parents and children, modeled on other summer camp programs.

Beyond the Box, Take 3: Mobile Summer Meals Program

Des Moines Area Food Bank - Des Moines



The food bank is proud to showcase how our community came together around the food bank's mobile summer meals program. As a result of this collaboration, over 14,000 nutritious summer lunches and snacks were provided for children in the heart of low-income neighborhoods, together with activities and special events. Community collaborators included state and city government, United Way, Food Lifeline and other emergency food programs, the school district, local churches, the YMCA, the local farmer's market, and Lions Club International. Each of these partners played a unique role in serving children at risk of hunger.

It takes initial capital investment to begin a new program and the food bank received this start-up support from United Way to fund the purchase of necessary equipment such as tables, signs, coolers, tents, etc. On-going funding was also critical to pay for summer meals staff, food, and transportation. The state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) summer meals program provided reimbursement for each meal or snack served while also providing invaluable training, meal planning expertise and oversight of the program.

State support is not sufficient to pay for all program costs, so the food bank relied on increased food donations to supplement its own spending. Food Lifeline support included single-serving food items such as yogurt, fruits and vegetables. Neighboring food banks and the school district also shared extra milk. This allowed the food bank to support its summer meals program with in-kind food without reducing its regular food distribution.

State-wide experience with summer meals programs has shown that more children participate in summer meals when activities are also offered. While food bank staff considered providing activities, we determined that our forte was food service and it was more efficient to involve experts in children's programming. Consequently, we invited the city's Parks and Recreation department to host our summer meals in conjunction with its summer camp program at one city park and to provide staffing for activities at another park. In addition, the local YMCA provided staff for one elementary school site to lead age-appropriate activities such as sidewalk drawing for young children and sports for older children. The food bank reciprocated by providing summer meals at two YMCA's for the weeks when their regular meal provider was not offering service.

Providing summer meals outdoors requires sheltered space. The food bank partnered with local elementary schools, city parks and recreation programs, the farmers market and two YMCA's, all of whom provided free space. Of course, space and manpower is also needed to make hundreds of meals daily. One church provided its kitchen five days per week at no charge while many community volunteers provided the labor to make meals.

The Farmers Market is the center of our community on Saturday mornings in the summer. In support of the summer meals program, the market gave the food bank free booth space to provide fun activities focusing on nutritional education for children while summer meals were offered. To provide additional access to nutritious foods, market tokens were offered to low-income families, allowing them to leverage every \$5 used from their Basic Food EBT cards with an additional \$5.

It was a special day when the Lions Club hosted their "Giving Library" at two summer meal sites. Each child received two books (in either English or Spanish) to take home for their permanent collection. According to a recent study, "Home library size has a very substantial effect on educational attainment (and) having books in the home has a greater impact on children from the least educated families. It is at the bottom, where books are rare, that each additional book matters most." Katie Brewell of the Lions Club was excited about the partnership, saying enthusiastically, "Kids walk away with a lunch and something to feed their minds!"

The food bank's summer meals program is at the center of a successful, community-wide effort to see that the most vulnerable children have increased access to highly nutritious, culturally relevant food and activities, providing them with a better chance to succeed.

What It Takes: This program is very replicable in high-need areas; planning must begin early in the year. First, we knew we needed more resources (funding, equipment, staffing and food) to support this program. The food bank immediately **approached a potential funder** to solicit their support and apply for funding.

Next, we had to **consider potential meal site locations** in our area, including schools, parks, churches, YMCA's, apartments, etc. (Locations in which over 50% of students qualify for the federal meals program are ideal because participants in these areas do not need to be prequalified on the basis of their family income.) After identifying potential school sites, we first approached school staff to **engage their support** and then went through an **application process** to receive school district approval. Likewise, for city park sites, we met with the Parks & Recreation director and applied for a use permit from our local city. The food bank made similar connections with the farmers' market and received permission from a church to utilize their kitchen at no cost. (Each of these relationships was an outgrowth of food bank participation in the local community; agencies do not need to work with this many partners in order to have a successful collaboration.)

As soon as site locations were finalized, we **hired additional staff** and **applied for the state OSPI program**, whose reimbursement for meals served would cover many of the on-going costs of the program. OSPI support required site **visits and trainings**.

Because we wanted to **add activities** to our meals, we approached several providers of children's programs, including the parks department and the local YMCA, both of whom were excited to provide activities on-site.

In order to ensure that its program was community based, the food bank **surveyed families** through the local schools regarding potential sites, meals and activities. A final list of meal sites was **advertised to the public** in numerous ways including flyers that went out with report cards through the local schools.

Finally, we **approached Food Lifeline** to become qualified as a meal program so that the food bank could place a separate food order for its summer meals.

Any food program interested in addressing childhood hunger should attend **peer-based trainings** throughout the year (including Washington Food Coalition's annual conference session on summer meals). Our own agency stands ready to assist any food program who wants to better serve hungry children by providing summer meals.

Taking Care of Teens

Teen Feed - Seattle



Teen Feed's mission is to work with the community and people from all walks of life to offer basic needs, build strong relationships, and ally with homeless youth as they meet their future off the streets.

For 25 years, Teen Feed has been the University District's only provider of dinner to street-involved youth and young adults, ages 13-25. We are open seven nights a week, every week of the year. Teen Feed addresses basic needs first: a hot meal, a referral to an overnight shelter, a few personal care items, socks, clothing, bus tokens, or crisis intervention. We recognize that a hot, nutritious meal on a cold and rainy night may get homeless youth in the door, but motivating a youth to move towards secure housing or a stable job usually requires a trusting relationship with a mature adult. Counselors and trained volunteers are present at every Teen Feed meal to help rebuild the trust that has often disappeared when youth have experienced family trauma. In 2011 Teen Feed served over 650 individual youth over 365 nights. We literally break bread together, and then we help street youth take control of their lives and help them to find a way off of the streets.

On May 25, 2011, Teen Feed sponsored Count Us In, the first point-in-time count of homeless youth and young adults in Washington State. Eight host sites provided meals, incentives, and activities during a two to three hour period in which trained staff and volunteers counted and surveyed youth in attendance. Survey results provide insight into the lives of the youth that we see every night at Teen Feed:

- Youth reported that they spent the previous night at: a homeless shelter, outside, at a friend's house, in jail, at home;
- 44% did not complete high school (last grade completed: 11th grade - 50%, 10th grade - 25%, 9th grade - 8%, 17% - 8th grade);
- 53% reported having a disabling condition (serious health condition; substance abuse; psychiatric illness);
- 33% reported having a coexisting condition (depression, ADHD, autism, bipolar, epilepsy, HIV+, temporal lobe disorder);
- Youth spent an average of 25.58 months coming to the University District for services; and 67% were unemployed.

Youth also had the opportunity to provide their thoughts and opinions on what they valued about Teen Feed:

- Teen Feed is awesome! It's daily. I like how it's very consistent. It's really supportive.
- It's mainly their attitudes. They create a welcoming environment and see what they can do to help.
- They are always concerned about my health and well being. I can't think of a single thing. It's more of a cumulative thing. You come in and someone says, "hello" or "hi."
- They listen. "Hey what's going on"? They see you on the street and wave. They ask me my opinion on stuff. They treat me like a human being. They smile.
- They treat us like equals. Most service people treat you as if you are insignificant.

We believe these comments are as valuable as the numbers because they reflect that Teen Feed provides what is most important and, sadly, lacking in the youth's daily lives—consistency, safety, and respect.

We are in the process of replicating the Teen Feed meal program right now as part of our Five Year Strategic Plan (2012-2016). We are in the early stages of this plan, which involves three basic steps:

- Determine where the need is greatest and where the program is replicable and sustainable.
- Implement Teen Feed's presence to establish and support ongoing collaborative efforts and support the movement toward countywide coordinated entry of homeless youth to identified social services in their neighborhood.
- Identify, train and support volunteer meal teams and advocates.

Perhaps the best measure of our effectiveness is the fact that we have food on the table 365 nights a year, trained staff and volunteers who help and support youth each of these nights, and a record of successfully helping youth obtain safe housing and a way off the streets (50 youth in 2011). We also evaluate the program by:

- collecting data on a monthly basis to evaluate and track program metrics including: whether a participant is new to the program, age, gender, outreach hours, volunteer hours and contributions;
- Performing subjective evaluations of programs through staff assessments and youth surveys; and
- Collaborating with Street Youth Ministries and the University of Washington to develop a database that tracks data relevant to individual youth's experience and evaluates the clinical services provided by our programs.

The Teen Feed meal program maximizes agency resources through a program design that relies heavily on volunteers and donations:

- Local churches and community organizations donate kitchens and eating areas every week to make Teen Feed possible;
- Meal team volunteers and others donate food for meals. The value of these donations totaled over \$66,015 in 2011;
- These same meal teams donated over 9,700 volunteer hours last year—buying the food, preparing it, serving it, and cleaning up;
- Another 3,800 volunteer hours were donated by our dedicated Advocates—trained community members who attend Teen Feed meals and sit down with youth, lending a sympathetic ear and directing them to appropriate community resources;
- A small but expert staff coordinates all meals and helps run our two other programs: a case management program for youth who are ready to take steps that will lead to a productive life off the street and a street outreach program that targets high risk youth who tend to avoid traditional social service agencies.

As the threshold program for many of the street-involved youth in Seattle, Teen Feed has identified a set of best practices and strategies to ensure that basic needs are met first (nutrition), and longer-term outcomes such as housing or a GED are achievable when youth are ready:

- We set very low barriers to participation: When a youth signs in to Teen Feed, we require three pieces of information:

name, age, and whether this is their first Teen Feed meal. We believe this has contributed to our consistently high utilization rates.

- We emphasize relationship-building: Research has shown that when street youth are given an opportunity to build rapport and trust with a mature adult, they begin to identify goals and develop a strategy to exit street life. Many of the youth we see have a difficult time reaching out for help from traditional social service agencies. Our staff and volunteers are skilled at building trust and rapport without alienating youth.
- We engage in an integrated, proactive team approach: We seek to reduce the time youth remain without support, reduce their exposure to harm and addiction, and fill a gap in the continuum of care offered by other agencies.

We rely heavily on volunteers: Teams from corporations, faith communities, schools and other businesses assume responsibility for buying, preparing, and serving hot, nutritious meals. With every meal served, community is built within the volunteer group, awareness of our larger community increases, and stereotypes are eroded

LISTENING TO CUSTOMERS

Survey Says: Customer Interviews Walla Walla Salvation Army - Walla Walla



Walla Walla Salvation Army (WWSA) appreciates the importance of hearing from customers regularly in order to provide the best possible service. They conduct customer surveys twice a year through one-on-one interviews. Questions they ask include: How long does the food you receive last? Are you on food stamps? What other foods would you like to receive? What isn't useful? How would you rate the atmosphere at our food bank? The answers are used to figure out if WWSA is meeting the needs of their customers and how they can improve. The survey is conducted on a single day, and they typically get about 25 responses each time. They use a visual scale with happy and sad faces, and provide interpreters to non-English speakers. Feedback is reviewed at a special staff and board meeting, and indicated changes are implemented. "Treating people with respect – that's primary, that's the goal. Knowing your customer base, serving your customer base – that's what it's about," says Reinikka.

What it Takes: Personable volunteers are needed to conduct the survey, and it will take time to develop a survey with well-worded questions that get at the information you need. Start with a short survey with five or six key questions. To show customers you are serious about respecting their opinions, make some level of change based on their input, and let them know it made a difference in how you run the food bank. This kind of input can be used to make incremental changes, and it is also great to collect information to inform a larger strategic planning process.

Another Survey Says: Take Two on Customer Interviews FamilyWorks Food Bank - Seattle



FamilyWorks food bank values the opinions of our customers to ensure that we are providing the best possible service to meet their food requirements.

Some of the highlights that we received from a recent customer survey include the following responses:

- Thanks for everything
- Treated with respect and dignity
- It's a good food bank
- Lots of resources
- It is truly a blessing
- Friendly people make you feel like we are one

- ...> This is a good place to come
- ...> Jovial, congenial attitude, therapeutic
- ...> Humble attitude
- ...> The people who help us were nice to me
- ...> That you are here to help us
- ...> It's always open when it says it will be
- ...> How they greet you and make you feel comfortable
- ...> The services that are offered
- ...> The assistance in reducing food expenses and out of pocket expenses
- ...> Food Bank management and staff
- ...> The people who help you care what you say
- ...> It's a lovely place
- ...> It's nice to see the volunteers interact with each other and us and talk to us
- ...> A place to come and forget about my problems for a bit
- ...> It leaves me feeling good and I have some food to eat
- ...> God Bless you for all your hard work
- ...> I feel like everyone is the same here, the staff is wonderful, even the police officer tries to relate to you
- ...> The people (staff & volunteers), are very friendly non-judgmental
- ...> A life saver!
- ...> Runs excellent
- ...> Great food: salads and fruit
- ...> Treated kindly and with dignity from all

What it Takes: Each customer that walks through FamilyWorks food bank doors is treated with human dignity and respect. FamilyWorks is an open and welcoming place that empowers people and families who might not otherwise have access to healthy, fresh food. Staff and customers interact together in relationships based on equality and respect.

In regards to the methods for administering the survey, FamilyWorks is required by United Way to get 200 surveys every year to their customers. They do the surveying in April. Board members & staff sit tables in the lobby and/or reserve a conference room. They usual get 200+ customers within a 2 week period. Most of their customers know the drill & don't need any interpreters, but they do provide the survey in English, Spanish and Russian. They are more than willing to share their surveys with others if you ask!

Translating Hunger: Meeting Community Needs

Hopelink - Redmond



In 2006, a team of volunteers from Leadership Eastside (LE) worked with Hopelink to conduct a series of focus groups with food bank customers, particularly non-English speaking immigrants. The research objective was to provide Hopelink with detailed information about the staple foods their ethnically diverse customer base would most benefit from receiving. LE organized five language-specific focus groups and two English language focus groups, scheduled at food bank locations. Outreach to customers to invite participation was done via phone calls by volunteer interpreters, and participants were given a \$20 gift card in appreciation of their input. The cultural/language groups covered were Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Eastern European, and Spanish-speaking. The following are selected comments from the report's executive summary:

- ...> Food bank customers know what good foods are and would like to have the resources to eat well every day. But good food is expensive and then need what little money they have for nonnegotiable expenses like rent.
- ...> It's not about quick and easy, but about making good, healthy food (soups, breads, meals) from scratch—they need ingredients, not convenience foods. This is not so much about maintaining and passing on traditions as it is about

focusing on healthy food.

- Often “lunch” is the main meal of the day and even kids who go to school prefer to come home to eat this meal (after school) rather than eat the free or reduced price lunch at school.
- Customers would like to be able to get more of the following items from the food bank: fresh or frozen meat, poultry and fish; fresh vegetables; dairy products, especially milk and cheese; fresh fruits; rice; flour; dried beans; tortillas; cooking oil; and sugar.
- The following items are less desirable: stale, moldy or expired dairy products, meat and bread; canned, boxed or processed foods. Acceptance of packaged foods could be increased if there was a way to get the labels translated into appropriate languages. Some of the reluctance is because the customers don’t know exactly what is in the can or box, or how to prepare it.

“The research has helped us to adjust some of our produce ordering for the populations we serve. For example, at our evening food banks in Redmond, we have a high number of Hispanics. In preparation for those nights, we stock jalapenos and other desired foods when our budget and availability permits,” says Scott Milne, Food Program Manager/Redmond Center Manager. “We also use this information when conducting food drives and purchasing other perishable and non-perishable food items.”

What it Takes: If your organization is interested in conducting market research with customers, you should seek out a person with relevant expertise to help you design an effective inquiry process. You may find that for-profit businesses in your community are willing to share their expertise in this area. Consider what incentives you can offer participants, and how to make them feel appreciated for their contribution to your learning. Also, make sure your organization’s leadership is committed to making changes based on the information they receive.

More good ideas...

- Recognizing that food bank customers also shop in grocery stores, the Pantry Shelf established a coupon exchange in their waiting area. “Price is important to our customers, and we can’t provide everything, so why not give them coupons?” comments Tom Galloway, Director. A sign on the coupon exchange box encourages customers to both bring and take coupons, and the coupons are being used.
- To better serve its diverse customer base, Tri-Cities Food Bank provides a multilingual fact sheet with instructions for registering and using their food bank in Vietnamese, Thai, Ukrainian, Russian, and Spanish. Rules about going through the food bank, an explanation of how the amount of food based on family size, and other basic information is outlined. “It’s important that people go through in a timely manner if we are busy, and we try to stay in the background so people don’t feel watched. This helps them be independent,” comments John Neill, Director.
- Hopelink noticed that some of their senior food bank customers have mobility problems, and had difficulty carrying their groceries home. At one point to solve the problem, Hopelink loaned rolling hand carts (like those used to carry a suitcase) to senior customers. They asked customers to sign them out just like a library book.

Community Relations

Emergency food programs need to be in constant dialogue with their community. As is evident throughout this catalog, strong relationships with all sectors of the community — low-income adults and families, business leaders, philanthropists, service clubs, faith communities — inform decision-making, reveal new sources of support and partnership, give your program greater visibility and reach, and enhance your reputation and your ability to fight hunger. The best practices below are organized into three categories: collaboration, public engagement and advocacy, and fundraising.

In addition, we offer the following general best practices for strong community relations:

- Network and participate in coalitions that connect you with other emergency food providers. Food banks, meal programs and other anti-hunger programs have a lot in common, and staying in touch, attending statewide conferences, and joining local coalitions is likely to pay off for your organization in multiple ways. The successes of coalitions based in King, Kitsap, Spokane and Whatcom counties are sprinkled throughout this catalog, illustrating the old adage that there is strength in numbers.
- Increase your connectivity in the local community. Participate in civic organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and service clubs such as Rotary and Kiwanis. These forums will give you a big picture perspective on your community and how your efforts fit into the larger scheme of community building and economic development. They are also a goldmine of potential supporters, board leaders and partners.
- Educate the broader community. Engage in discussions with people of all ages in your community about hunger and solutions to end hunger. People who are informed about the problem of hunger in their community and the best ways to combat it are likely to become strong supporters of your efforts. However, they may need you to connect the dots. For example, it may not be obvious to casual food drive donors that your need for cash is greater than your need for cans.

COLLABORATION: WORKING IN COALITION & CREATING PARTNERSHIPS

“Everyone has a lot of energy about the coalition and that’s what keeps things going!”

– Julie Washburn, Washington Food Coalition

Sparkling Anti-Hunger Activism

Anti-Hunger Coalition Whatcom County - Bellingham



Whatcom County’s Anti-Hunger Coalition (AHC) started because there was some tension between local programs regarding territory and donor relationships with stores. It wasn’t clear who was rescuing food from which stores, and what each food bank or meal program’s service area was. The group came together to clarify who serves who, coordinate open hours so that more days were covered, and to make sure that all stores were being asked to donate, but only by a single program. Once clarity of roles was addressed and relationships were built, AHC focused on networking and sharing of effective practices, such as leads on cheap stuff, how to buy a truck, etc. Many years later, the coalition still operates informally, with participation from food banks, tribes, meal programs and other anti-hunger advocates (such as a gleaning project, Bellingham Community Meal, and students working on anti-hunger projects at

Western Washington University). Networking and mutual support are still high on the group’s agenda. However, they have also gotten involved in political education.

A few years ago, the group was sitting around complaining that at the local candidates' forums, there was a lot of talk about environmental issues, but no one was talking about other issues affecting low-income people. AHC created a candidate's forum for mayoral, and city council and county council candidates where they ask pointed questions about issues such as hunger and homelessness, such as "What do you think the city's role should be in ending hunger?" Candidates make public statements about what they will do, and AHC can hold them accountable. Organizationally, AHC benefits from having a paid facilitator to coordinate and run their meetings. This person is paid by Bellingham Food Bank (BFB) out of general operating funds. Mike Cohen, BFB Executive Director, comments, "I don't have the time to do the facilitation, and it's nice because it's not being directed by the EFAP lead agency—the facilitator manages the agenda. If things ever got contentious, it would be helpful." He also notes that AHC is not a forum for EFAP-related business, and welcomes all anti-hunger programs and advocates. This helps keep the focus on issues, not dollars.

What it Takes: A broad focus on ending hunger helps draw on diverse community programs and resources. Keep your coalition simple. Set a consistent meeting time and place. If you are having trouble figuring out where to start, identify common issues that affect all emergency food programs, such as the Letter Carriers' Food Drive, or coordination around holiday events. Larger organizations within the coalition may be in the best position to contribute resources: meeting space, money for refreshments or supplies, or funds to pay a facilitator.

Collaborative Food Distribution Program

Jewish Family Service, Seattle Jewish Day School of Metropolitan - Seattle, Bellevue



In September 1993, Jewish Family Service (JFS) formed a partnership with the Jewish Day School of Metropolitan Seattle (JDS) to provide a food bank for more than 100 households of senior-aged Russians living in the Crossroads area of Bellevue. This program is a joint project of JFS and JDS with the dual goal of serving food to the growing population of senior Russian immigrants and offering the JDS students an opportunity to give back to their community while learning about community service, hunger and poverty issues. Once per month, food is purchased from Pioneer Human Services' Food Buying Service and delivered to the JDS storage shed. As part of the 5th grade curriculum, classroom students help with the assembly of bags of groceries with teacher supervision. The bags include a variety of 10-15 items, such as cooking oil, canned goods, soap and toilet tissue. Food distribution occurs after students are dismissed. Additional adult volunteers then assist food bank staff members with food distribution. The partnership with the JDS and the efficient and effective use of resources at the JDS are critical to the success of the program.

What it Takes: The first step is to identify a public or private school partner. Meet with school administration and teachers to formalize relationship, including outlining clear expectations for the food program and for the school. Keep in mind that the school will need storage space. Develop program infrastructure, including how food will be procured and delivered to school, volunteers to assist with distribution, tracking of customers, and schedule for classroom involvement. Provide training to teacher(s) and volunteers on supervision of students, personal and food safety, and food distribution guidelines.

Community Resource Center: Bringing a Range of Services Under One Roof

West Seattle Food Bank - Seattle



When the West Seattle Food Bank (WSFB) planned its new home, the organization elected to partner with others to develop a dynamic, multi-use building. The new West Seattle Community Resource Center has the food bank on the first floor, space that is leased to other community nonprofits on the second floor, and 34 units of low-income housing on upper floors. The housing is owned and operated by Delridge Neighborhood Development Association, while WSFB owns their space and the office space above. Tenants all share a large conference room which can also be rented to outside groups in the community. WSFB recognized the value of having other human service nonprofits in their building since their customers may overlap. Rents are set so that WSFB offsets their costs. WSFB is also partnering with additional providers who conduct outreach and offer services on site in their large waiting area. The lobby is big enough to accommodate outreach tabling by programs such as Basic Food and Lettuce Link, and there is also an adjoining private office that can be used by visiting service providers. "We invited others in before, but they ended up conducting outreach to people in the line outdoors. We are excited to have this space," comments Steven Curry,

Executive Director.

What it Takes: Capacity to own or lease additional space beyond the food bank's needs, property management skills, commitment to collaboration.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY

Adapting a National Event Locally: Hunger Awareness Day

Ocean Shores Food Bank - Ocean Shores



In conjunction with National Hunger Awareness Day sponsored by Feeding America, Ocean Shores Food Bank (OSFB) holds a food and donation drive at their local grocery store. The store participates by stocking needed items that the food bank requests, and flagging them with attention-getting orange shelf markers throughout the store. OSFB volunteers greet shoppers at the door throughout the day, and pass out flyers about Hunger Awareness Day. They use materials from Feeding America to organize and publicize the event, and used Food Lifeline, Feeding America and OSFB logos across top of letter. "It's important for people to know that it's part of a national day, we really want to hook into that," comments Dalene Edgar, Chairperson of the Food Bank Committee. This type of event raises awareness of hunger and provides an opportunity for anyone to donate at the level they can. "I have an image of a senior on a fixed income donating a jar of peanut butter and feeling really good about it, really connected," says Edgar. She continues to say that another woman at this year's event said, "What do you mean there's hunger in our community?" After a 20 minute conversation with an OSFB volunteer, and — now — a real belief that hunger exists in Ocean Shores, she gave a \$200 check. Overall, the drive raised \$1,700 in cash and collected over 2,000 pounds of food. "We had an extremely successful day. It raises awareness, which is the whole idea. Many people don't know that there is a food bank."

What it Takes: OSFB used Feeding America materials to help craft their press release. Local papers carried articles about the event before and after. OSFB has a strong relationship with the local grocery store and the store manager, who supported the event. Feeding America also provided orange lapel ribbons, and these were very popular for people to wear and show their support. "We decided to keep it really simple," Edgar comments. "We tried to reach people so they can understand it, they can all participate. For us, the food drive was simple and people understood it. I went on the A2H website and read about what others did. You need to make it work for your community."

Taking It to City Hall: Engaging Public Officials

Seattle Food Committee, Meals Partnership Coalition and the City of Seattle - Seattle



The Mayor's End Hunger Awards originated as a program of the United States Conference of Mayors in the early nineties. At that time, City of Seattle staff brought the idea to the Seattle Food Committee (SFC) and encouraged nominations. Now, Seattle Food Committee (SFC) and the Meals Partnership Coalition (MPC) work with the city to maintain the program, which includes recognition of five individuals and/or organizations doing extraordinary work to end hunger at an annual luncheon (timed in October near World Food Day). Nominations are solicited each year in several categories: business or community partners, volunteers—group or individual, and program leadership—individual or organization.

The event raises awareness of the work being done in emergency food and the people who support these city-wide systems. Award winners are often people who are donating thousands of hours or dollars worth of goods or services to the emergency food system. It's also an opportunity for food bank staff to meet and share their work with the Mayor and City Council turnout from public officials has been great. For the past few years, the event has been held at one of Northwest celebrity chef Tom Douglas' restaurants with his strong support. Attendees pay \$20 which helps cover the event costs. "We make sure it's a quick program and a great event with a great location and food. We are lucky to have the Mayor's commitment to be there to give the awards. It makes people feel really special," comments Trish Twomey, Food Resources Manager, Solid Ground. There is no fundraising ask at the event. Press coverage has varied over the years.

What it Takes: This event requires management of the nomination and selection process, coordination logistics and registration for the event, and handling of press relations. Many SFC members contribute – one person brings flowers for the tables, another picks some up for the awardees, a local company donates the plaques and these small touches help make the event a success. Hunger Awards could be done on a smaller scale in other communities, with simple certificates and a dessert reception rather than a luncheon. A relationship with a local restaurant to host is helpful, and you will definitely need a public official who is committed to be present and recognize awardees. It can be difficult to get small food banks to participate in nominating their leaders. Even with a simple nomination process, consider doing additional outreach to these programs so they can also be recognized along with more established, staffed programs.

Washington's Own Advocacy Event: Hunger Action Day

Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition - Statewide



During each legislative session, the statewide Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition hosts Hunger Action Day to make a difference in the issues facing hungry families in Washington. This lobby day is designed to build advocacy skills among anti-hunger program staff, boards and volunteers; to highlight the legislative priorities of the anti-hunger community during session; and, to bring hungry people's stories to legislators so they can make positive changes.

This event began more than 10 years ago and has grown to a successful event with over 150 people attending in Olympia. Attendees spend the morning networking, learning more about the legislative priorities that affect hunger and nutrition programs, and developing skills to advocate effectively for these priorities. The afternoon is spent meeting with staff and legislators to share customer stories and the importance of the Coalition's priorities.

What It Takes: To organize a lobby day, organizations need public policy expertise to develop and promote timely and effective legislative priorities. Then a planning committee - with skills related to communications, event planning, promotions, legislative relationship-building and outreach to partners - helps ensure that a wide diversity of advocates come to Olympia well prepared to talk to their legislators.

To participate effectively in a lobby day, organizations need to be sure they are receiving information about the legislative priorities throughout session and make it simple for their staff, boards and/or volunteers to come to Olympia to learn and share their expertise with their lawmakers.

Building Visibility and Brand Identity

Good Cheer Food Bank - South Whidbey Island



Good Cheer Food Bank worked with a local communications specialist to develop a marketing campaign that has improved over all brand identity and enhanced hunger awareness on South Whidbey Island. The first objective of the marketing program was to increase food bank funding. Increased revenues through thrift store sales, community donations and grants were identified as the sources available for funding. Other objectives included increasing its volunteer base and collecting in-kind donations. The success of the outreach program can be attributed to “smart marketing” techniques to raise awareness of Good Cheer through newsletters, posters, special events, press releases and advertising with the tagline of “creating a hunger-free community.” As a result of these efforts, public visibility, thrift store revenues, community donations, food allotments and numbers of volunteers steadily increased.

Good Cheer Food Bank & Thrift Stores celebrates its 50th year in the food bank business. The challenge to keep the message fresh while maintaining a consistent theme can present challenges. Good Cheer developed a branding tagline of, “Creating a hunger-free community.” The marketing program continues to use that tagline as its main theme while building on it with some community building themes such as, “Buy Local, Donate Local, Feed Local.” Each marketing/educational event uses the basic components of who we are feeding (neighbors & friends), what we are feeding (nutritional foods) why we are feeding them (safety net, compassion, feels good).

What it Takes: The marketing program could be replicated if customized to meet the needs of a particular food bank. The cost for developing the program depends on how much pro bono work from a consultant one can find. The costs for implementing the program depend on how well you use free social media (Facebook, blogs, websites) versus printed materials (newsletters, brochures, other printed and/or mailed materials).

Get Yourself to the Table: Being a Community Partner

North Helpline - Seattle



The North Helpline (NH), which runs the Lake City Food Bank, is actively engaged in the life of their community. Their executive director participates in the Economic Development Council of Lake City (EDCLC) as well as the Lake City Chamber of Commerce. As a result, both groups are supportive of NH’s work, and see the organization as an integral part of their community. Many of the local businesses represented have employees who rely on the food bank, and they recognize that. Meetings are a chance to share information and get support. EDCLC has a diverse membership, including apartment owners, business owners, and social service organizations. Together, the group has a good picture of their community and generates realistic ideas for community improvement. Executive Director Rita Anderson, who represents NH, indicates that she has learned a lot at the meetings about homelessness from another member who runs a service program through a local church. Anderson also feels that she has the backing of the business community as she enters into negotiations with a new landlord, and that they will advocate for NH if needed. “It’s important that we are looked upon as a business,” says Anderson. “I see this as a leadership issue. You don’t do anything in isolation, and you need those around you to get things done.”

What it Takes: Active involvement in a local chamber or other community organization takes time and energy, and may pay off over the long term rather than immediately. North Helpline is able to participate actively in several local business associations because they share the time commitment among several staff and volunteers. Serving as a liaison is also a good board member contribution, and good relations with the local chamber may lead to additional board or volunteer recruits in the future.

“It’s important that we are looked upon as a business. You don’t do anything in isolation, and you need those around you to get things done.”

– Amy Besunder, Executive Director North Helpline

A Community Celebration: Open Mic Night

Recovery Café - Seattle



Open Mic Night at the Recovery Café was started to serve three purposes: to create a night of fun without drugs and alcohol for people in recovery, to create a place where those who have what they need would come into contact with and develop relationships with those who do not have all they need, and to invite a broad range of community members to come learn more about the Café's work and to be a part of it.

Every month, Recovery Café hosts an Open Microphone Night. The Café sets up a PA system, and the community celebrates a night of good food, poetry, jokes, speeches and music ranging from a capella, rock and roll, and lip-syncing. Members and volunteers alike share talents to entertain and affirm each other. For many people new to recovery, there is a fear that without drugs and alcohol their lives will be better, but they will never have fun again. Open Mic night dispels that myth and provides a great opportunity for people to see what the Recovery Café community is all about.

A community partner "hosts" the night by bringing in a meal and decorating. Recovery Café found that many organizations are hungry for a meaningful volunteer opportunity that they can do with their friends, family and/or faith communities and Open Mic is appealing to different age groups, communities, and to the person coordinating opportunities for their group to serve in a way that has more energy than the traditional group volunteer projects. Volunteers for Open Mic become more engaged in the Café as regular volunteers, donors and advocates after their initial contact with the Café via Open Mic. Hosts of the Café's Open Mic nights have included a diverse range of groups including: a Boy Scout troop who cooked a meal in Dutch ovens, a competitive girls soccer team, several Church groups, youth groups, a traveling barbecue catering company, and Microsoft. Additionally, many groups bring gift bags for the Members that has included, socks, hats, hygiene items, etc. Beyond the practicality of the helpful gift bags, it also reinforces the Café's fundamental message to all who come: You are loved, you are worthy of good things. By creating a "safe" place where people interact, misperceptions about what it means to be homeless, or struggle with a mental illness can be dispelled. Open Mic provides an excellent venue for diverse groups and communities to plug into the healing power of the Café. Everyone is welcome to eat together, perform, applaud, laugh, clean up and enjoy the night in a beautiful place with an atmosphere of joy and mutual sharing.

What it takes: Procure either through purchase or donation a simple PA system. Recovery Café has Members that are trained to set up, run and take down their PA system to ensure efficiency. Each month, recruit volunteers who are willing to donate and prepare a meal, and be clear with them that you are counting on them to bring ALL the food for the night, the number of people they will need at a minimum to host the night, and what your expectations for clean up are so there are no misunderstandings or extra outlay of resources to make the night a success. Train someone to coordinate with the various volunteer groups, and create a template of what a group needs to bring in terms of how many people will be served, what time to come, basic parameters, etc. Recovery Café is happy to share our Open Mic template or to host interested parties at one of our Open Mic Celebrations.

Digging In: Engaging the Public in New Ways

Mother Earth Farm, Emergency Food Network - Pierce County



The Emergency Food Network (EFN) envisions a strong, local food system that prioritizes food security for low-income residents. As a part of this vision, EFN runs the Mother Earth Farm in Orting, where it has a long-term land lease on eight acres of farmland that produced more than 138,000 pounds of fresh food last year distributed through the emergency food system. Food is harvested in the early mornings and transported to designated locations for pickup by local emergency food programs.

This project is a good example of partnerships and collaboration because the farm operation depends on 1,100 volunteers and just one paid staff person. EFN has tapped groups of employees from corporations such as Boeing, Kraft, and Frank Russell Company, just to name a few. Staff from Metro Parks Tacoma

help out, along with children from local childcare centers and schools – with some schools tying the farm work in with their curriculum. Inmates from the Washington Correctional Center for Women at Purdy also provide many hours of volunteer labor. Finally, the farm has sparked lots of interest among the general public (who are then educated about emergency food system needs and often become donors). Furthermore, the land is leased at one dollar per year from a supporter.

When asked how this project came to be, Executive Director Helen McGovern shared, “We decided to do it because the opportunity came up and the board allowed it to happen. We were afforded the ability to do this because we are a local, Pierce County organization. We have deep roots in our community, relationships that led to this. I believe the most effective response to the local hunger problem is a local effort.” She also adds that, “We were told that an organization like ours can’t do this. We are now in year twelve. It’s a great source of community pride.”

EFN is building on this success with additional local food projects. It has planted a 13-acre orchard on land connected to an affordable housing project developed by the Korean Women’s Association, and is in negotiations to start a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project that will preserve Pierce County farmland and generate revenue as a social enterprise to underwrite some of the operating costs of Mother Earth Farm.

What it Takes: An affordable, long-term lease on land; a person knowledgeable enough to rebuild soil and prepare the land for farming; an upfront, visionary funder to underwrite the first year of operations; strategic partnerships; ability to rally community support and media attention; and, the capacity to harvest and distribute fresh produce grown.

All Aboard! Hunger/Emergency Food Provider Tours

Seattle Food Committee - Seattle



During the month of August, Seattle Food Committee (SFC) members visit area emergency food programs instead of holding a regular meeting. A new tour is developed each year highlighting a theme of interest to members (new equipment, remodeled programs, a neighboring community). The tour lasts the better part of a day, and visits five to six programs for 30-45 minutes each (lunch is served at one of the sites).

The tour is particularly educational for distribution center staff, administrative staff or board members who wouldn’t otherwise get out and see multiple programs, so it attracts a different crowd from those who attend SFC coalition meetings. “You always learn new things,” notes Trish Twomey, Food Resources Manager, Solid Ground. “It might be little things, like a new way to hold plastic bags when loading them, but there is always something.”

What it Takes: An organizer to pull the tour together. In this case, Food Resources contacts the programs to be visited and handles the arrangements. This past year, they even graduated to using a tour bus so that everyone could ride together to each site (in the past, tour participants carpooled). While this cost money, it was great to promote information sharing and networking en route. SFC charges attendees part of the cost of their lunch, and this seems to lessen last minute no-shows.

Making Your Case: Documenting Unmet Customer Need

Thurston County Food Bank - Olympia



Thurston County Food Bank (TCFB) has been collecting information about the level of unmet need in their food bank, and sharing the information with Washington State Senators and other elected officials to demonstrate the need for supplemental funding. In particular, with the amount of federal commodities dropping, TCFB wanted to document unmet need for this program. They decided to use the existing program sign-in sheet, and ask people to sign in if they qualified for the commodities program, even if no commodities were available. They then marked these sign-in sheets noting that no food was available to distribute to these customers. Their message to legislators: “Here are all the people who meet the guidelines for TEFAP, but couldn’t access food. The

information is compelling,” says Executive Director Robert Coit. “These are real people, real signatures, real addresses. This is not a generalization or blanket statement.” TCFB didn’t want to create a separate system to measure unmet need. They used what was already in place.

What it Takes: This effort would be easy to duplicate. You will need to coach your volunteers to explain the rationale, perhaps even provide a script, so that it is clear to customers why you are asking them to sign even though they can’t receive food that day. TCFB has primarily done this with customers that they have a relationship with, so that they don’t confuse a new customer or lose trust. In order to make sure that customers get the message about how their signature makes a difference, you may want to have a regular, trained volunteer make the request.

Holistic Emergency Food Systems

Meals Partnership Coalition - Seattle



In all communities both large and small it takes a combined effort to ensure that everyone has access to nutritious and whole-some foods. Since its inception in 1999 Meals Partnership Coalition (MPC) has seen the value in creating an equitable emergency food system. One practice that has been occurring in many communities across Washington is the collaboration between emergency food providers. Traditionally this has been focused on relationships between food banks and meal programs separately. MPC advocates that its members look not only to their normal community partners, but to the entire community for sharing relationships. Meal providers and food banks can both look to one another for information about what they are serving, who is seeking support, where the need is greatest, and to identify excess resources which can be shared. In addition, it is critical to come together as a community to educate local leaders about the importance of community based investment into the emergency food system.

What it takes: Building a list of local emergency food providers, coming together to discuss the needs of the community, and a strong commitment to value all community members as equally important.

Bricks & Mortar: Running a Successful Capital Campaign

What is a capital campaign? It’s a special fundraising drive to pay for a major capital project such as a new building, building renovation, or purchase of costly equipment. The campaign pays for a one-time cost, usually “bricks and mortar.” The following tips come from Toppenish Community Chest, and West Seattle Food Bank, two organizations that have run successful capital campaigns to build new facilities.

- Strengthen your board of directors. Your board should be connected with different segments of the local community, and be united in their support for the project.
- Complete a feasibility study – an assessment of community support for your project and whether you can meet your fundraising goal. You need to look at your internal capacity to carry out a capital campaign, and understand your donor base and whether they will support your project. The feasibility study helps you understand what resources are in your community that you can tap for support and increases visibility for the project.
- Determine the nature of your project, and set a realistic campaign goal. Are you building a simple, warehouse style structure or community showplace? Will you build alone or co-locate with other community services? Multi-use projects can be wonderful, but they are also more complex and can be more expensive ventures.
- Anticipate increasing costs. WSFB’s project costs skyrocketed from \$1.2 million to \$3.3 million from initial design concept to finished construction.
- Map out your community to identify potential supporters. TCC looked at “everyone” in their community – churches, businesses and individuals. They would request an appointment and go and make their presentation and request support. Most were able to help, though you need to be prepared to have a few doors slammed in your face.
- Be aware that fundraising consultants don’t do the fundraising for you. Staff and volunteer leadership is required from within your organization to strategize and ask for gifts.
- Cultivate legislators so they will assist you in accessing public funding at the city, county or state levels.

Going Beyond Emergency Food: Advocacy

Oregon Food Bank - Portland



The mission of Oregon Food Bank (OFB) is to eliminate hunger and its root causes. According to Advocacy Director Jon Stubenvoll, the Advocacy Department is “the root causes part” of OFB. The organization’s advocacy efforts are focused on influencing policy affecting hungry and low-income people in Oregon and Clark County, Washington.

OFB works on a range of issues, including food and nutrition, food systems, housing, and human services programs. While advocacy efforts could focus on public education or outreach, OFB primarily concentrates on public policy advocacy, working directly on federal, state and legislative and budget issues. In addition, they have a core citizen engagement piece, focused on organizing food bank partner agencies and individuals to support public policies and working with low-income families to tell their real-life stories. Because food banks work with other organizations to distribute emergency food, food banks also have a unique opportunity to deepen the engagement of partner agencies and work with them on public policy.

OFB Advocacy’s recent successes and activities

- ...> Completion of 15th annual Voices project. Through interviews and focus groups, OFB collects the stories of emergency food recipients and publishes them in an annual Voices report. The goal is to ensure the experiences of hungry people are taken into account during public policy and budget debates.
- ...> Passed an innovative fish bycatch bill during the 2012 session of the Oregon Legislature. Under former law, bycatch fish (fish caught unintentionally during commercial fishing) could be turned over to food banks. However, food banks found it cost prohibitive to process the fish. Under this new law, fish processing businesses are able to keep a reasonable amount of the bycatch as a form of payment and food banks should now have an increased supply of fish.
- ...> Began a relationship with the Childhood Hunger Coalition (CHC) through which OFB provides staff and administrative support to CHC. CHC is an interdisciplinary group of health care providers and anti-hunger advocates that provide education, outreach, and research on the link between food insecurity and poor health outcomes. Recently, OFB secured a grant in partnership with CHC to fund a pilot project testing the feasibility of identifying and addressing hunger in a clinical setting.
- ...> Stubenvoll’s tips for organizations interested in getting involved in advocacy:
- ...> Engage your board of directors, and make sure your organization is committed to advocacy. This may be a new type of activity, especially for direct service providers.
- ...> Clearly define what you mean by advocacy. Does advocacy mean public education, public outreach, or influencing public policy?
- ...> Build advocacy into your strategic plan, and set specific advocacy goals. How will you impact root causes in an organized and thoughtful way? Being strategic might mean thinking about which issues are most important to your organization and constituents, for example, the federal food commodities program. Or perhaps you have a high percentage of disabled or senior customers, and want to advocate on those issues.
- ...> Determine what efforts are underway already. What coalitions of organizations are working on that issue? How can we make a meaningful contribution? Can we join forces?
- ...> Once you put yourself out there, you will be asked to join many coalitions, sign on to many efforts. While they may all be worthwhile, it is easy to get scattered or overwhelmed. Before agreeing to work on something, think about how you want to spend your limited time.

Everyone Counts: Individual Giving Program

Ballard Food Bank - Seattle



Ballard Food Bank's primary cultivation (relationship building) and solicitation — asking someone for money — methods include two newsletters sent to people on their mailing list, sending out two direct mail solicitations annually, and offering recurring donation opportunities (via credit card pledge) through their website. In addition, BFB has some very loyal donors that send checks every month to support their work. Nancy McKinney, Executive Director, observes that individuals are the core of giving to nonprofits. Grant funding can be intermittent, but individuals are dependable year in and year out.

What it Takes: At BFB, the executive director plays a major role in coordinating fundraising efforts. Our Development Associate takes on some aspects, such as generating thank you letters, and assisting in planning events, BFB outsources some work to contractors such as a mail house that sorts and labels the newsletter for bulk mailing. Contacts are managed using an online donor database system.

McKinney offers two key strategies for individual fundraising:

- Articulate a clear and compelling mission and communicate that mission to as many people as possible.
- Develop relationships. Donors give because they have a connection to your organization, so reach out to people most likely to be interested in the work you do.
- Volunteers are a good place to start. They can be ambassadors for the organization, and identify interested individuals or organizations that your organization can follow-up with and ask for a donation.
- Next, strengthen relationships with vendors and contributors of in-kind gifts, and ask them to consider financial support.
- Participate in and cultivate community organizations such as churches, Rotary Club, chambers of commerce
- Recruit a connected board of directors. BFB has 12 people with really good community connections.

Show Me the Money: Generating Revenues through a Thrift Store

Inter-Faith Treasure House - Camas



Inter-Faith Treasure House (IFTH) runs a thrift store in the same building as their food bank. IFTH has 200-300 shoppers per day, and the thrift store revenues are an important source of funds to purchase food. Their thrift store generates income of \$150,000—\$160,000 per year. Nancy Wilson, Director, notes that a thrift store requires community support, and that it takes a while for donors to learn about what types of donations are acceptable. Having the thrift store is complementary to the food bank in that IFTH can offer food bank customers clothing vouchers for use at the thrift store.

What it Takes: A thrift store is labor intensive, and requires a reliable corps of volunteers. IFTH is open six days a week, with four clerks on duty each day (two in the morning and two in the afternoon), plus a paid store manager (known as the Person in Charge) and four to five sorters to sort through new donations. IFTH has a volunteer manual and teams new volunteers up with experienced mentors for training. Wilson stresses the importance of reporting back to the community regarding what you are doing with the money, so they are committed to giving more. Finally, operating a thrift store requires finding a good location, and maintaining a bright, uncluttered store with quality merchandise.

Show Me More Money: Effective Special Events

North County Community Food Bank - Battleground



North County Community Food Bank (NCCFB) has an array of special events that raise funds to support their operations. NCCFB does two garage sales each year, a Victorian tea luncheon in the spring, a “Cruise In” car show and a fall dinner auction. The events net between \$2,000 (per garage sale) up to \$35,000 for the dinner auction. One of the special things they do at selected events is bring in local celebrities (such as the fire chief, mayor and the county sheriff) to serve tables. In addition to developing special events that engage different segments of the community, NCCFB uses direct mail and a giving circle to encourage further individual contributions. All these events bring in new donors, and NCCFB mails them all a solicitation letter during the holiday season. This appeal has a twist: donors are invited to make a gift in honor of a friend rather than purchase a traditional gift. NCCFB then sends a special card

acknowledging the gift to that person. NCCFB also created APPLE – the Association of People Providing Life Essentials, a circle of donors who give \$100 per year or more. They publicize this giving opportunity by branding their three biggest events

– the tea, auction and car show – as APPLE events. APPLE members may give a single one-time gift or pledge as little as \$10 per month.

What it Takes: “Make sure you have a crew to help you – you can’t do it alone,” says Elaine Hertz, Executive Director. Everyone pitches in to plan NCCFB’s array of events, including all staff and volunteers, and they are often involved in planning for several events simultaneously. Each event has specific demands. For example, the car show requires a permit for the location, outreach to local car clubs, sponsors for the event and for each trophy awarded, t-shirts, publicity, and a system to register cars. Hertz values sponsors particularly as they contribute in advance, providing funds that are critical to pay out event costs in advance of most of the proceeds coming in. NCCFB is set up to accept credit card donations – this is necessary for events, but also works out well as they can accept donations by phone.

Make it Your Own: Tailoring Events to Meet Specific Needs

Walk for Rice, Asian Counseling and Referral Service - Seattle



Walk for Rice is a major annual fundraising event for Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS) Food Bank and Nutrition Programs. Due to the strength and dedication of volunteers, the Walk for Rice has grown from a small grassroots effort into an annual event that gathers over 1,000 participants. Some proceeds come from corporate sponsorships, but the bulk of funding comes from individuals who make donations as well as collect donations from others. Local businesses and community organizations form teams to fundraise and display solidarity against hunger in the community. In addition to raising money, the event raises public awareness of hunger and in particular, the needs of low-income members of the Asian Pacific American community. For example, ACRS is committed to keeping rice, a staple of most Asian diets, available at its food bank on a regular basis. Walkers are motivated to raise funds to meet this culturally specific need. “We need a message that resonates,” comments Gary Tang, ACRS Aging and Adult Services Director. “Walk for Rice – our message about Asians needing rice is really simple. People get it and they understand that all they need to do is walk for rice so people won’t go hungry.”

What it Takes: Advisory Committee, six month timeframe for planning and handling of all event logistics, including: reserve date and location, line up sponsors, develop publicity materials, conduct outreach to recruit walkers, register participants, line up volunteers and entertainment. Over time, as the event becomes more established, your effort to secure sponsors and your learning curve will lessen. Learn more at walkforrice.kintera.org

“We send out a newsletter twice a year thanking our community for their support and telling them the needs of our customers. We have a great response. Since we are all volunteers and we have been doing this for almost 19 years, our community knows we are committed to helping our neighbors in need and they willingly help us.”

– Fran Walster, Director, Maltby Food Bank

Milk Money Bellingham Food Bank - Bellingham



Got Milk? Not long ago, Bellingham Food Bank always ran out of milk early into each distribution. We had been relying solely on donated milk from grocery stores. The amount of milk we received varied greatly, but it was never enough. Finally, one of the volunteers who staffs the “dairy station” said she could not stand to tell all but the first few families that visited each day that we did not have enough milk. “Either get more milk or find another spot for me to volunteer. It’s no fun telling families that we don’t have enough milk for them.”

The volunteer inspired Bellingham Food Bank to create and launch its Milk Money program. Milk Money is a simple to implement and replicable. It was too much for us to find any donor who could buy enough milk for the food bank to meet the demand. But, when we looked at how much it might cost to ensure each family could get ½ gallon of milk each time they visited, the monthly cost didn’t seem as intimidating.

Essentially, Milk Money is a sponsorship program. We determined that if we had \$750 each month, we could buy the milk we needed. The food bank began to solicit a dozen sponsors that we believed had the capacity to raise \$750 in a month. We knew that if we could get 12 sponsors, one for each month, we could close the milk gap. Churches, local businesses, civic clubs and others were told of the program. We told each sponsor that we not only wanted them to sponsor a month, but to sponsor that month each year. They would “own” the month and would know the impact they were making. If successful, their contribution would purchase all the milk the food bank would need to give each family ½ gallon per visit.

Milk Money has been very successful. We now have more than one dozen sponsors and are buying more milk than ever before.

Sponsor a Holiday Product Program Snohomish Community Food Bank - Snohomish



A special Thanksgiving and Christmas Fare has been a long-standing tradition at our Food Bank and, even with the poor economy, 2010 was not going to be different ~ only more efficient. Our plan was to feed 100 more families this year over last, but how were we going to provide enough food for everyone? How were we to have enough room for all of the food drive collections to get the food we really needed to provide the same meals to everyone? The answer to both questions was in the Sponsor A Holiday

Product program.

Last October, we contacted schools, churches and civic clubs and asked them to help us to provide a week's worth of food for our 300 families for Thanksgiving and again for Christmas. Instead of the usual request of "Please hold a food drive and remember holiday food", we asked each group for one item, but in quantities of 300.

In years past, we utilized the request-a-food drive-method of virtually everyone in our community. Our back room would fill up with canned pumpkin, canned cranberry sauce, green beans and French fried onions rings, but other items were missing and we would have to shop for the difference.

Our community is very giving and supportive and we knew if we had specific requests, they would rise to the occasion. We had more customers than past years and needed the additional help to meet the needs of every family.

What It Takes: This program can be easily replicated! It only needs someone to plan ahead and keep it organized. We made a list of what we wanted to offer our families for Thanksgiving: Bacon, Cake or Brownie Mix; Cereal – Cold, Chicken Broth, Cocoa, Coffee, Corn, Cream of Mushroom Soup, Cranberry Sauce, Eggs, Evaporated Milk, Flour, French Fried Onion Rings, Gravy, Green Beans, Jell-O, Juice, Mandarin Oranges, Margarine, Marshmallows, Milk, Olives, Paper Towels, Peas, Pies, Pumpkin,

2011 Agency Excellence Awards – Excellence in Collaboration

Sausage, Stuffing, Sugar, Tea, Turkey Roasts, Turkeys, Turkey Trays and Vegetables, as well as our baby needs, senior section and special diet items.

We made a budget of what we could spend if we had to buy items.

We took an inventory of what we had in stock. We looked to Food Lifeline, NW Harvest and VOA to see what we should expect for the holidays. We noted those items that had been pledged, like the fresh vegetables from Klesick Farms. Finally, we found the best prices on items that couldn't easily be donated, like coffee and frozen pies, and placed an order.

Then, we made another list of the items that weren't covered and sent it along with a plea for sponsorship for one of those items. Within hours our first pledges came in: The School District sponsored Chicken Broth and Olives; St. Michael's Catholic Church requested Jell-O; the Girl Scouts wanted to collect marshmallows; The Bridge Church sponsored cocoa, juice, tea and mandarin oranges; and the list goes on and on. We asked the sponsors to deliver the items on the Friday or the Monday before serving our customers, so we could place the product on the floor instead of holding it in the non-perishables, as space is at a premium this time of year.

We had a community volunteer working to fulfill her Rotary member service requirements by offering to make calls requesting pledges for the turkeys and hams from local businesses. They answered her call to action.

This program worked with one exception. One of the groups failed to collect any of their pledged items and we had to buy the difference between what had been randomly donated of that product and 300 units. We still mark that as a victory. The grocery list was far shorter than it would have been without the help of our community.

The customers responded positively with the Director getting called to the floor often by persons who simply wanted to say thank you. Two telephone calls, an e-mail and three Christmas cards followed with the same message.

Explain the steps you've taken to ensure that your activities make efficient and effective use of your agency's resources.

The food that was earmarked for Thanksgiving and/or Christmas was held in its own location within our non-perishables room. Since the majority of it was pledged and being collected at various locations off-site, we were able to have the use of that space that would have otherwise made it crowded.

By taking inventory with our volunteer sorting teams, we were able to plan for specific numbers for donations and purchases. This way, we would not end up with too much of one specific Holiday product. Last summer, we tried to push out some of the leftovers by labeling one week of service as Thanksgiving in July – it just didn't sell! By e-mailing the list in one big request, there

was very little time spent on request for donations, explaining the program or even waiting for the sponsorships. Everyone was quickly on board! It was fun for the community groups, it was efficient for the Food Bank and it was a gift to our customers.

Another aspect of the collaboration was that in hearing we were limited in freezer space for the turkeys and hams that were being donated by individuals and businesses, the Superintendent of the school district came to the Food Bank and offered freezer space in one of two nearby schools. We were quick to accept their offer and trucked many boxes to the school's shelves where they stayed until the day of service.

On Tuesday, November 23rd, 185 families made it through the snow and ice to pick up their turkeys with all the trimmings. We were expecting 300, so we had an emergency opening on Wednesday. With a skeletal crew, we called as many customers as we could to tell them we were here. Fifty more families were served.

On Tuesday, December 21st, we offered the Christmas Fare to all of our customers by appointment, as we did not want to make them come for it on Christmas Eve (the regular Friday service day). 321 people shopped for their families from 11:00am until 8:30 that night. There were hams and turkeys for every family, as well as fresh fruit and vegetables, canned goods, milk, butter, eggs, bread, pies . . . breakfasts, lunches and dinners were provided for the full week.

The Sponsor A Holiday Product program was economic on time, space, and funds. It was good public relations as we reached out to our community with specific needs and they were comfortable with that request. Some even went above and beyond what we were asking. It proved to be an amazing team effort and in the end, families were well fed for the Holidays.

Just today, one of the gentlemen who drops off weekly donated food from his church reported that the program was recognized to the third hand when two Principals of local schools thanked them for participating in feeding families from their schools!

Empowering Local Programs: Fundraising Technical Assistance

Rural Resources - Colville



Rural Resources has a radical philosophy when it comes to fundraising. They believe that EFAP lead agencies should not be raising money for their emergency food programs in areas where their fundraising competes with that of local food banks they serve. “Don’t cook in your own backyard,” says Roger Trapp, Community Services Program Manager. “If we start competing with the local food banks for product or funds, we undermine the little nonprofits that are seeking out an existence in rural Eastern Washington.” Instead, Rural Resources focuses on soliciting large corporations rather than local businesses and individuals. They see it as their role to provide fundraising technical assistance to individual food banks. Rural Resources has assisted food banks in three of the 13 counties they serve with donor research such as information on income levels and types of housing in particular ZIP codes, and encouraged several food banks to work together on a mail campaign. They also support Northport Food Bank’s Friday Night Out annual event which draws a crowd to the small town of Northport for dinner, live entertainment and dancing. Rural Resources’ information technology staff person has also assisted the small food banks they serve. “You have to figure out who you are working for,” says Trapp. “We work for our food banks.”

What it Takes: Working this way is a philosophical commitment by Rural Resources because they know that the philanthropic capacity in small towns is limited. Their approach means that Rural Resources may pass on fundraising opportunities in certain communities, and even watch as the smaller organization fails to maximize a particular opportunity. However, they feel that their approach strengthens overall community capacity in the long run.

Advice on Grantwriting

- One person doesn't write a grant, it takes a team to write a good grant. Make sure you have a team.
- Look at other people's grants that have been successful.
- Make sure there is a match between the funder's mission and yours.
- Don't make mistakes. Follow their guidelines and wording. If not, they will drop it in the garbage.
- Remember that grants are usually either small or very competitive. It's not as easy as it used to be. According to Sue, a veteran grantwriter, partnerships and local relationships are the best way to go.

A great resource that we found in our travels through our friends at WHY Hunger is www.npguides.org. The “np” stands for non-profit and it's a website entirely about grantwriting! Templates are included.

Plug In: Maximizing Community Networks

Willapa Food Bank - Raymond



Talk to Director Bob High about fundraising for the Willapa Food Bank, and she'll immediately say, “I'm the wrong person to talk to. We don't do any fundraising here. We are fortunate to have enough resources.” The food bank is so successful, they turn down revenues from a local thrift shop run by the Ministerial Association, encouraging them to donate elsewhere. Further investigation reveals that the Willapa Food Bank has enough resources because they have outstanding visibility and a great reputation in their small community. The food bank benefits from a number of third party fundraisers — charity events organized by others where the proceeds go to the food bank. These include a “Food Bowl” competition at the local schools, and fundraising and food drives at the local hospital and local businesses such as Curves®, the women's gym, that take place annually. At the United Church, a food bank

volunteer has taken to handing out grocery bags as his fellow parishioners leave church services, and asking them to bring them back full the following Sunday. High also notes that if they are short on something, she can give the Elks or other local lodges and service clubs a call, and “food shows up on our doorstep.” How do they do it? “A lot of talking,” says High. “Everyone in town knows me, and knows that I am with the food bank. And our local paper runs a listing for us every week. We are amazed at the cooperation.” The small town-feel of Raymond, and overlapping memberships among food bank volunteers, civic clubs and churches are helpful in keeping the lines of communications open.

More Fundraising Ideas

- The Maltby Food Bank had an event at Ruby's Diner, which donated the cost of the meals purchased by food bank supporters who went to the diner that night and turned in the official event flyer, netting \$300. Why it's a good idea: Restaurants events are a win/win for your program and the local restaurant. The restaurant gets the chance to be a good corporate citizen, which creates some good publicity and new customers. The food bank gets needed funding and increased community visibility. An event like this makes giving easy and fun.
- When the Loon Lake Food Pantry & Resource Center bought their new building, they started a monthly giving club. Members pledge \$25 per month, and know the money is going to pay off the food bank's mortgage. Why it's a good idea: **Donors willing to commit ongoing support over time provide stable revenues and reduce the cost of fundraising. Donors like giving for a specific purpose, such as paying the mortgage. Offering a chance to give monthly makes giving larger amounts more affordable for donors.**

- ...► The Food Ball is an annual fundraiser and food drive that plays on the traditional rivalry between Aberdeen and Hoquiam High Schools by having high school students compete for most funds and most pounds of food collected during a 10-day period. Since its beginnings in 1981, the event has grown and now “supports five local food banks for from six months to a full year,” says Jim Coates of the Grays Harbor/Pacific County Food Bank Distribution Center. Why it’s a good idea: It’s engaging to high school students, it fills a social need in the community, it’s an annual tradition that builds naturally over time, and as a “third party fundraiser,” it doesn’t require as much food bank staff or volunteer time.
- ...► Emergency Food Network is encouraging supporters to host a Baby shower on behalf of not one baby, but for the 44,000 babies from low-income families in Pierce County. Invitations and the party format will resemble a shower (with games designed to educate people about the needs of low-income families), but cash donations rather than baby gifts are solicited. At each shower, guests are also invited to consider hosting their own shower in the coming year. This strategy requires qualified hosts who are well-connected in the community and will follow-through and make their party great. Staff support is also needed to design invitations and activities.
- ...► **Why it’s a good idea:** House parties are low-cost events (hosts offer their homes and often cover the costs of food and drink). Because they are intimate and personal, people are often moved to give more, and it’s a great, easy way for your supporters to invite their friends to get involved.

Transportation

The area of transportation presents many challenges for emergency food providers. Fuel costs have risen steadily, and the costs of owning or leasing a truck are high. As the system shifts from primarily non-perishables to an emphasis on fresh and frozen foods, refrigerated transport is required to ensure food safety. Distribution centers and food banks are meeting these challenges by sharing resources and cooperating to maximize efficiency and ensure that trucks are full rather than empty as they move food around the state. General best practices in transportation include:

- Distribution centers and larger agencies investing in trucking equipment and transporting food on behalf of smaller food banks and meal programs
- Food banks working in coalition to share the expenses and benefits of owning a shared vehicle
- Working in partnership with trucking companies and trucking schools who can provide donations of transportation and vehicle maintenance

Going Places: Trucking School Partnerships

Community Services of Moses Lake, Inc. - Moses Lake



Community Services of Moses Lake, Inc. (CSML) partners with the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) program at Big Bend Community College to safely and reliably transport food. The partnership is beneficial for both: students need to complete a certain number of hours of driving time and CSML needs additional transportation resources. CSML contracts with the CDL program to pickup from Northwest Harvest (NWH), Yakima once a month. They complete three direct drops to area food banks, and the rest comes to CSML in Moses Lake. The program promotes safety and maximizes resources. It also works out well for NWH, since they have to load one huge truck instead of nine little ones. "It's a win-win for everyone, as far as we can see," says Penny Archer of CSML. "Plus the drivers get to learn interpersonal skills – they're getting more than just a driving experience." One challenge with a school relationship is that there are always new drivers. However, the instructors are a constant, and handle the scheduling directly with NWH to match their changing class schedule. The partnership grew from a single volunteer who suggested that CSML staff meet his instructor.

What it Takes: The school provides the trucks and drivers, and carry their own insurance coverage. CSML's board insists on an annual contract that releases them from liability. CSML covers gasoline costs at fifty cents per mile. Students cannot participate in loading or unloading, so it's important to be able to field volunteers to unload the truck promptly on arrival.

"Fuel costs are so high, none of us can afford to roll those wheels empty."

– Mike Regis, Director of Procurement Northwest Harvest

Evaluation: Working for You

Rotary First Harvest -Greater King County



Rotary First Harvest (RFH) acts as a conduit between farmers and the programs that serve hungry individuals and families in our region, collecting produce and other nutritious food and getting it into the existing emergency food distribution channels. Since their focus is on transporting food, they solicited funding to conduct research on ways to improve transportation for the hunger

response network. The research was conducted by a professional research firm, and included key person interviews with diverse stakeholders such as commercial trucking groups who were donating services or offering reduced rates, as well as distribution centers and EFAP lead agencies receiving high volume donations. The resulting report provided fresh insights for RFH and their partners. To David Bobanick, Executive Director, important learnings included gaining insight into businesses motivations for donating and increased clarity about key transportation corridors and trucking hubs statewide. They also learned that “it’s a deal breaker if the truck and driver has to sit and wait at either end” of a donated trucking run, so they are working to reduce waiting times at both donation locations, such as cold storage facilities and distribution centers. These insights will allow RFH to be more strategic in deciding what donations to accept and to advocate for changes that will improve the experience of donors and their willingness to continue to provide pro bono trucking services .

What it Takes: Research can be an invaluable aid to meeting your mission and goals more strategically. In particular, listening to donors and other community partners can reveal new opportunities to leverage resources and talent for community benefit. Formal research such as the study RFH commissioned requires expertise to design effective and scientifically valid research methods. For this type of research, you may want to seek outside funding and/or join together with other organizations that would also benefit from the research in order to support consulting costs. The project will also require active involvement from your organization’s leadership to help define research questions and identify relevant stakeholders.

Traffic Busters: Cooperative Trucking

Emergency Food Network, Northwest Harvest, Coastal Harvest - State-wide



The agencies above have been collaborating for some time on transportation, sharing food and moving it out to people. By working together, the group is able to increase efficiency, reduce transportation costs, and take advantage of special opportunities. This was coordinated in response to a situation several years ago, when Emergency Food Network (EFN)’s past Executive Director David Ottey received a call about a very large potential donation of frozen vegetables in Grandview and Wenatchee, Washington. The amount of food was too large for EFN to handle on their own, and without collaboration, they would have had to refuse the donation. After consulting with Northwest Harvest (NWH)’s Director of Procurement Mike Regis, a plan was worked out for NWH to secure temporary storage for the Grandview vegetables, while EFN dispatched a truck to retrieve the donated product in Wenatchee. On the way to Wenatchee, EFN’s

driver stopped at NWH’s Seattle warehouse to pick up a load of food they needed delivered to Wenatchee, so the truck didn’t travel out there empty. Meanwhile, during this same 36-hour period, EFN received assistance from Coastal Harvest, who drove to Oregon to pick up a donation on their behalf. Regis sees many benefits to the collaborative relationship these three organizations have developed: “Fuel costs are so high, none of us can afford to roll those wheels empty. We try to make the most efficient use of our equipment and professional staff. In addition, this increases our ability to serve donors — you have to make sure that when the donor calls, you can respond. And all of us are getting into delivery now. We receive more donations of frozen and chilled foods, and the health department has become more stringent about keeping food at safe temperatures, which means we need to deliver in refrigerated trucks.”

What it Takes: This collaboration has been very successful because all three agency leaders have a can-do attitude to help each other accept donations quickly. “We jump on it,” says Regis. To establish this type of collaboration, try to find partners who have a collaborative and can-do attitude when dealing with challenges — a willingness to go after the product and say thank you in a sincere way. For food banks in other parts of the state, going in together to share transportation costs may allow you to accept greater quantities and new types of donations, especially if together you can afford to share a refrigerated truck.

Collaborating Locally: Sharing a Truck

In Seattle, South King County and Kitsap County, food bank coalitions are working together to ensure that they are able to get the deliveries they need from Food Lifeline (FLL), Northwest Harvest (NWH) and others. Here's how it's working for these coalitions:

- In Seattle, Solid Ground (SG) operates two trucks to provide delivery service to 19 of the 26 food banks in the city. One refrigerated truck is owned by SG. A second truck is leased three days a week. Both are driven by professional drivers employed by SG, and they also budget for maintenance and repairs, fuel, insurance and a cell phone system to communicate with the drivers. Thanks to City of Seattle funding, SG is currently able to offer delivery service to food banks free of charge. In the past, food banks have contributed to cover trucking costs based on a formula that accounts for their size and usage. The schedule has been developed over the years, and is difficult to change as many food banks plan their hours according to the delivery schedule. SG has a relationship with a local trucking service that provides substitute drivers when the regulars are ill or on vacation, and having these reliable substitutes has been very helpful.
- The South King County Food Coalition Transportation Project was developed to increase the capacity of emergency food providers in South King County. Instead of using rented trucks, unreliable paid transport service or volunteer transport, the Transportation Project pools resources from several agencies to purchase a truck and fund a driver to pick up and deliver donated food. Participating food programs have better access to food from FLL and NWH and other local businesses as a result. By sharing cost and transportation, food delivery is streamlined. After initial research and negotiation, funding was acquired to hire a part-time driver – three days a week – and to purchase a 20-foot delivery truck with a 12,000 pound payload and electric pallet jack. The Multi-Service Center (MSC) is the fiscal agent of the project and the primary owner and caretaker of the truck. Currently, six agencies operating eight programs are Transportation Project participants. Each agency pays a per-trip cost that covers part of the costs of operating the program, and grant funding covers remaining costs.
- In Kitsap County, many food banks benefit from Bremerton Foodline's truck. They carry FLL and NWH deliveries out to the north end of Kitsap County at a cost of \$20 per food bank per trip. This works well for everyone since the trucks used to drive that way empty en route to pick up donations of fresh produce from grocery stores in that area. The Kitsap County Food Bank Coalition (KCFBC) also has a partnership with a local trucking company. KCFBC collectively purchased a truck trailer, and the trucking company keeps the trailer at their location and makes monthly runs on the ferry to pick up food at NWH and deliver it. The trucking company donates their time and costs for these runs.

Checklist of things to think about:

- Scheduling
- Truck (with or without lift gate)
- Maintenance and repair costs
- Equipment for loading and unloading, such as a pallet jack or fork lift
- Roadside assistance
- Qualified driver
- Role of lead agency Insurance for the vehicle
- Cost sharing system

Tips from the Pros:

- Make sure you have a skilled, reliable driver with a good driving record and the customer service and interpersonal skills to deal well with a changing array of volunteers and a variety of loading situations. They may need a Commercial Driver's License depending on the size of the truck, and should prioritize safety.
- In developing your budget, make sure to establish a maintenance reserve fund to cover repairs and upkeep costs for your truck. Research your insurance needs as well.
- Consider leasing a truck. The rental company may offer roadside assistance and insurance options, and you won't have to deal with repairs.
- Think through what additional equipment you may need, such as a lift gate and pallet jack. SKCFC keeps their pallet jack in the truck at all times. They can't load as many pallets, but the pallet jack can be used at each location.
- Grants and government funding are likely sources of capital to purchase the truck, but these donors will want to see your plan to sustain the project over time.
- Develop a cost-sharing plan that is affordable for participating food banks, and get their commitment to participate in advance. Consider inviting meal programs to participate, too.

Organizational Strength & Capacity

Organizational strength and capacity building has a number of aspects. This section highlights effective operations, nonprofit infrastructure, and management of people.

Operations

Nonprofit organizations need to develop appropriate policies and procedures to run their programs smoothly. The size and complexity of the organization should reflect the scope of programs, and an outside reviewer should express confidence that the organization is stewarding and using community resources effectively. General best practices in the operations arena include:

- Having written policies and procedures that are up-to-date and accessible.
- Sound financial management, including accurate and complete record keeping, annual budgeting and oversight of finances by the board of directors.
- Accurate tracking and reporting of program statistics.
- Records of all donations made to the organization, and donor contact information to cultivate future support and provide acknowledgement.
- Choosing an organizational structure and nonprofit status appropriate to meet the mission.
- Engaging in strategic planning to set goals for the organization, including adapting to a changing operating environment and preparing for disaster.

Infrastructure: Facilities, Equipment & Technology

Recognition is growing that emergency food providers need infrastructure in order to consistently provide effective programs. Well-designed facilities, appropriate equipment, and adequate hardware and software to meet information technology needs are all critical success factors for nonprofits. At the same time, nonprofits are usually under-resourced and have trouble raising capital to invest in adequate infrastructure. The best practices in this section illustrate the power of investing in these areas. General best practices in the area of facilities, equipment and technology include:

- Designing or laying out food bank space in a way that maintains customer and worker dignity – inside waiting areas, space to allow for customer choice, and a pleasant work environment for volunteers and staff.
- Safe working conditions, with appropriate equipment to perform key tasks without strain.
- Computers and software that allow for accurate, secure management of customer data and easy reporting to funding partners and donors.
- Telephone and internet access to support information and referral for customers.
- Refrigeration, sanitary areas for repacking food, and any other necessary facilities to ensure food safety and freshness.

Leadership & Human Resources: Boards & Volunteers

Nonprofit organizations are nothing without people who care, and this is particularly true for anti-hunger organizations. Food programs are heavily reliant on volunteers to perform most tasks, from food sorting to fundraising, governance to taking out the trash. In the nonprofit sector as a whole, there is a trend toward increasing reliance on paid professional staff, but the emergency food industry remains primarily volunteer-driven, making it particularly important for them to effectively manage volunteers and establish working governance structures. General best practices in the area of leadership and volunteer management include:

- Establish an active board of directors who understand the range of nonprofit board responsibilities
- Draw volunteers from different sectors of the community, including groups and individuals, people of all ages and professions, and people who reflect the cultural and language groups represented in your customer base.
- Mentor and encourage the development of the next generation of leaders. Develop a leadership succession plan to reduce reliance on a single founder or a small group of volunteer leaders and ensure that the organization can continue

after these individuals retire from active service.

- Supervise staff effectively: set clear expectations, evaluate performance annually, and offer support and opportunities for professional growth.

Joining Forces: Merger

Spokane Valley Partners - Spokane Valley



A few years ago, Spokane Valley Food Bank and Spokane Valley Community Center resolved to merge their services under one umbrella, Spokane Valley Partners, for the benefit of the community they serve. Although co-located for many years, the organizations had different organizational cultures, so the merger took time and effort on both sides. In order for the organizations to come together, both boards had to agree that this was in their organization's best interest to meet their missions, and the boards had to come together philosophically. The merger was compelling because it allowed them to operate more efficiently, increase their capacity for service, and gain more clout as a larger organization. "We are stronger financially, programmatically. Our programs complement each other," comments Ken Briggs, CEO. The food bank gained infrastructure such as better technology, information management systems, professional fundraising staff and better benefits for staff. The trust building process took time, both before and after the merger took place. The two organization's boards were very different — hands-on for the food bank, and policy-making for the community center. As part of starting fresh, the merged organization adopted a new name and agreed to hire a new CEO to oversee the new, larger organization. The executive director of the food bank stayed on as program director. Board members from both organizations were invited to join the new board.

What it Takes: Negotiating a merger requires board members who can think strategically and stay focused on their vision for the community, even if painful changes such as cutting staff or leaving one location are required in the short term. Board leaders must have the ability to build relationships and find common ground with the potential merger partner. Once the two boards agree to move forward with a merger, legal advice and/or consulting services to guide the process is helpful. Be patient — adapting to change takes time for everyone involved. Briggs also points out that programs interested in closer partnership can take incremental steps such as co-location, a shared accountant or development director, or a joint operating agreement. A merger doesn't need to be done in one fell swoop.

Eliminating the Guesswork: Operations Manual

Loon Lake Food Pantry & Resource Center - Loon Lake



Several years ago, Loon Lake Food Pantry & Resource Center took a major step toward shared leadership by getting vital information out of Director Sarah Nelson's memory and into a written operations manual. Thanks to a volunteer with great writing skills and an eye for detail who took the lead, they now have an operations manual. The manual covers everything from obtaining the food to storing the food to filling out all the forms required by funders and distribution centers. Lead volunteer Fred Mesch describes the manual as a "guide for the food bank perplexed."

What it Takes: Someone willing to document what you do in writing. Other food banks can benefit from Loon Lake's experience: copies of their manual are available from Washington Food Coalition, and you are encouraged by the author to "take from it mercilessly!"

Washington Food Coalition even has a template form of this resource to make it easy for you to tailor it to your own agency's needs.

Greenwood Food Bank Inventory System

Volunteers of America Western Washington - Seattle, Everett



The Greenwood Food Bank Inventory System was developed to track the flow of food resources through the Food Bank. We have designed an Excel Inventory System spreadsheet and process that can be applied to any food bank desiring an inventory capability. It allows us better organization and visibility of resource inventory for our volunteers and staff. It's as simple as a request and the spreadsheet will be sent! We also have a Power Point available with instructions.

We recognized that we were not able to continuously provide a balanced diet to food bank customers because we often ran out of certain food items. We would have to RE-act to the shortage on the food bank shelves and ask the community for their help with these items. Unfortunately, that would take up to two weeks to engage the community with food drives to obtain the necessary donations to provide our customers with enough choices to satisfy the five food groups. This short fall became an apparent need to serve our customers a nutritionally balanced diet of grains, meat & beans, fruits, vegetables, and dairy. In order to be PRO-active, we needed to know how much food we had available so that we did not experience empty shelves. This information is also helpful when answering donor questions such as 'What do you need?'. Information is power and enables us to fulfill our responsibility to feed our hungry neighbors. It was identified by a community volunteer that an inventory system would strengthen our program's ability to meet the needs for customers and donors.

What it Takes

Step One: To begin setting up the Inventory System, an average item count per box must be established for each Food Category. Then it is entered into the Assumption Sheet and is used to track the item count per food type. The Assumption Sheet should be completed prior to entering information into the Inventory System spreadsheet. Then Daily Tally Sheets and Inventory Box Tags are created (A sample is included in the Inventory System spreadsheet). This is as simple as listing the Food Category (Canned/Dry/Bulk/Meat/Dairy/Produce) and the Food Type under it (Fruit/Vegetables/Soup/etc). The date should also be added to ensure a First In, First Out best practice.

Step Two: A physical count of the current inventory in the food bank should be the starting point for implementation. Inventory Box Tags are dated with today's date and placed on each box. As a box receives a box tag, a tick mark is placed on the Daily Tally Sheet under the appropriate Food Type. Once physical inventory has been completed, the Daily Tally Sheet is used to input the data into the Inventory System spreadsheet by Food Category Type.

Step Three: When a new donation is received and it is time for it to be evaluated, the food is sorted into Food Type. When a box is filled, the correct box tag is selected, dated and the Food Type is circled. A Daily Tally Sheet is ticked under the appropriate Food Type and then the box is moved to inventory storage area.

Step Four: Throughout the day, as volunteers remove boxes from inventory to stock the food bank shelves, the box tags are removed and placed in a designated area. At the end of the day, the tags are collected, counted by Food Type, and then subtracted from the Food Category spreadsheet. The Daily Tally Sheet is also input into the Food Category spreadsheet.

Step Five: Once all information for the day is entered, it will automatically be combined into the Inventory Summary sheet. This can be used regularly to plan healthy meals for food bank customers.

The biggest indicator has been that we are now alerted to what food items we are in need of before we run low. This ensures that our customers receive healthy meals when they come to the food bank. Another indicator has been an improved outreach strategy. We can target specific needs and ask our community partners to step up to the plate and donate so our shelves do not become empty. We have a resource easily available to all the staff so they can communicate the food bank needs at any time.

The inventory system has actually showed us more efficient and effective uses of our agency's resources. Staff time is being used more effectively when deciding what items will be used to stock the shelves for the week because we are able to see at a glance

the amount of food we possess. Before the inventory system, much more time was being wasted in the effort to decide on what to stock the shelves with because we didn't know how much we had or what was coming in.

One of the biggest resources our agency has is volunteers. The inventory system has made our volunteers even more effective because they can quickly locate items by date in an assigned location. Volunteers have been empowered to see the importance of food safety even though they have been trained on this. For instance, meat is dated when it goes into the freezer and volunteers can see which meat should be pulled first to ensure best practices in food safety.

Our outreach efforts have improved because information is now quickly available to any staff or volunteer that is speaking to individuals, groups, churches and/or schools about the food bank needs. Whereas before, the staff had to gather information from a number of people to accurately determine what food we needed.

When reviewing the inventory summary we can identify if certain items are not being cycled into the food bank for meal selection. This alerts us to the possibility of foods that may be waiting too long in inventory and expiration could occur. To ensure food safety, we would then physically inspect expiration dates and develop a meal plan to include those items. The summary also allows us to make sure that we are providing well balanced choices to meet the increased demand of people who use the food bank.

To meet the increasing needs of hungry people, we created an inventory system that can maximize our facility storage, volunteer and staff time, community partnerships, and overall insurance in food safety best practices. It has strengthened our food bank program enormously to better serve our customers with nutritious food.

Food in Motion

Operation Sack Lunch - Seattle



Food in Motion OSL approaches the work we do in the community from a place of shared resources. With our Food In Motion program, we currently rescue more than 300,000 pounds of viable, nutritionally dense food, and high quality proteins, each year, that otherwise would be discarded into the waste stream. We use this food for the more than 1200 meals we prepare daily for the hungry and food insecure; breakfast, lunch, and dinner, seven days each week. We also share these resources with other agencies in the Seattle area; providing pick-up and delivery for those organizations that do not have transportation resources or the ability to procure high quality meal ingredients. Food In Motion has allowed us to develop relationships with a variety of donor partners. Meal preparation, focusing on nutritional content and dietary restrictions, as well as meal ingredient rescue is the primary focus of our organization. We network

with and complement other meal programs by being active partners in rescuing, sharing, and delivering nutritionally dense meal ingredients to their respective programs. We monitor and evaluate our efficacy by keeping accurate records, conducting surveys, and including our stakeholders in organizational decisions.

What it takes: OSL is an organization that has been built on services that are accessible and inclusive to all. There are no requirements or restrictions associated with receiving a meal or food resources from our organization. We are committed to our foundational premise that Nutritional Excellence is a right we are all born to, not a privilege that we earn. OSL is also committed to contributing to the health and sustainability of the food safety net for the greater Seattle Area. We believe that hunger can be eliminated in our community by the sharing of resources, and ideas, and by the creation of a common voice that is non-political in nature, promoting the communal common good as the focal point. We created Food In Motion as an instrument to organizationally participate in addressing hunger needs with and for the greater community. We currently have 46 food donor rescue partners, and 22 meal supply agency recipients. These numbers fluctuate. Through these partnerships we schedule pick-ups and deliveries, sort food, maintain temperature control, and anticipate what our partner agencies are looking for to better serve their customer base.

We are an organization that has learned to navigate with fluidity while we also understand that we must create concrete action steps towards our own longevity in order to continue to be a major component in Seattle's food safety net for challenged populations. This understanding has a multidimensional benefit to our customers and to our own program. Our Food In Motion program (FIM) contributes to the greater hunger needs in the Seattle community by providing nutritionally dense, quality proteins and other meal supplies such as produce, herbs, etc. to other Seattle area Meal Providers for their customer base, thus expanding our reach to the hungry and food insecure in our community. We also participate in the 'greening' of Seattle and work to help eliminate the extraordinary amount of food that is dumped into the landfills each year. Food items account for 13% of landfill waste. More than 33 million tons in rotting food is dumped into the garbage each year creating methane, greenhouse gases, which are 22 times more toxic than carbon dioxide. Wasted food costs Americans over 100 billion dollars each year. FIM puts only a small dent in this extraordinary waste, but it is a start. By rescuing more than 300,000 lbs or 150 tons of food each year before it hits the waste stream, we contribute to the economic well-being of all the programs we share these resources with, as well as contributing to the well-being of our own customers by offering meals that are made with safe, healthful and quality ingredients. Finally, through networking and partnerships we actively participate in our dedication to building the capacity and sustainability of our over-all organization and to continue to be instrumental in the ongoing creation of a sustainable food system for the hungry and food insecure in our community.

Saluting Good Ideas

Food Lifeline - Seattle



Food Lifeline (FLL)'s Excellence Awards are designed to promote and share great ideas that will help end hunger. Begun in 2006, the program invites large and small agencies to nominate their best practices for recognition in several categories. The idea grew out of FLL's experience monitoring agencies that contract with them, and being impressed by the amazing work that agencies are doing but others may not see. "There are many 'best practices' that agencies develop but are unaware of how unique or effective they are compared to what other similar programs may be doing. They are also not necessarily aware of how many other agencies could benefit from borrowing their great idea," says Tiffani Kaech, Agency Relations Manager. Although FLL always tried to share this information informally, the Excellence Awards gives the ideas more visibility, recognizes the agency publicly for their creativity, and encourages them with a cash award. Applications are solicited in four areas of excellence, and several FLL board members serve as judges. To promote fairness, judges evaluate applications with agency identifying information removed. Award winners are held secret until they are announced at the FLL annual agency conference, where they receive a plaque, a check and are publicly applauded for their work. FLL has tried to create a process that allows even the smallest volunteer-run agency with a great best practice to apply and win. By applying, agencies agree to share their idea, put it in a how-to format for others to read, and even polish their grantwriting skills.

What it Takes: FLL has worked to create an accessible, fair process for identifying and recognizing best practices in emergency food. For a program like this to work, it is important to keep the application and process simple and transparent. Designate a contact person to be available to answer questions or give advice to applicants. Set a realistic timeline allowing adequate time for each stage in the process. If you want to make awards on an annual basis, design your program to be sustainable and manageable over time.

Get Ready: Preparing for Disaster



While many food banks and meal programs help families and individuals respond to the recurring emergency of hunger, they have yet to create and implement a plan to respond to a local or regional disaster or emergency. But recent natural disasters across the country and around the world have started some programs preparing before disaster strikes. Barb Shimizu, Coordinator, South King County Food Coalition (SKCFC) points to Hurricane Katrina which hit the Gulf States in September 2005 as the impetus for their disaster planning. "We realized that it was 'our customers' sitting stranded on those rooftops,"

she said. Emergency food programs are a valuable resource “in efforts to reach and educate vulnerable populations such as low-income families, immigrant populations, and shut-ins,” says Shimizu.

With funding from King County, SKCFC completed an assessment as a first step that “will provide the foundation upon which we can build our emergency preparedness plans.” The assessment gave SKCFC members a clearer picture of the hazards facing their community. An Americorps*VISTA member from the Washington State ReadyCorps joined the SKCFC in December 2006 to assist members in completing their emergency plans and putting important pieces in place, such as making arrangements for each food bank to have an alternate location to operate from in the event that their facility is shut down due to disaster-related damage. “Acting together makes sense. If your neighbor doesn’t have a strong plan and you do, there’s a problem. We now understand how it is all going to fit together” adds Shimizu. SKCFC expects to continue their preparedness work together. “Consider the decision to purchase generators. Think of the duplication of effort if each food bank is researching generators separately. It makes sense for one person to research it and to seek funding together. The same goes for developing educational materials for our customers.”

Seattle embarked on its own initiative which benefited from the six-month presence of Nick Maryns, a Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow through the Congressional Hunger Center. The Seattle Food Committee (SFC), which represents each of the 27 food banks, worked to create an emergency response plan for local agencies. The plan aims to prepare food banks as a coalition, as individual agencies, and to educate customers. The primary goal is to enable food banks to communicate effectively, work together to share resources, and refer customers appropriately in a disaster situation. Maryns developed a comprehensive guide to disaster preparedness (see reference below), including a template for an emergency preparedness plan that would be useful to any food bank in any type of disaster. One thing that Maryns heard from food bank staff and volunteers is that they feel disaster-preparedness is important, but that they simply feel that they “don’t have time” to tackle the issue. For individuals who feel this way, he suggests taking incremental steps – for example, dedicating five minutes once a month to prepare for an emergency. Though it can seem daunting and unrealistic amidst the urgent daily events of a food bank, there are simple measures that can be taken to better prepare for a disaster, he says.

Robin Rudy, Director, Tenino Community Service Center, took her first step by creating a special emergency pack for diabetics. It contains a cooler pack for insulin and room to hold pills and other items. Working with the Thurston County Public Health & Social Services Department, she has helped prepare the Tenino Food Bank for an emergency by educating its volunteers and customers alike. All customers are regularly given pamphlets with their food bags, with information on what to do in a disaster, such as how to make one’s own emergency package. Many food bags also contain a bar of soap, provided by the county to encourage hand-washing and other hygienic practices, to prevent the spread of the flu and other diseases. Rudy has also been working with Robert Coit, Executive Director, Thurston County Food Bank, on disaster preparedness at a county-wide level.

Maryns says one of the most important things in an emergency situation is to know who has what information, and who can do which tasks. Having updated contact lists, making sure that all staff and volunteers know how to shut off gas lines, and maintaining a first-aid kit are all basic actions which any food bank can and should take. Maryns also acknowledges that for individuals and families who face food insecurity as part of their daily lives, thinking about what they would do in a disaster situation may be overwhelming. One lesson he has learned very quickly is the importance of how the message is delivered. Rather than sending a message of fear, make the message an empowering one, he notes. For example, instead of emphasizing how unprepared people are, share what they can do to better prepare themselves. Resource: *Hungering for Disaster Preparedness: Strategies, Resources and Tips for Food Pantries and Their Coalitions*, available on the web at <http://www.solid-ground.org/publications/HDP.pdf>.

INFRASTRUCTURE: FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

Blueprints: Food Bank Design

Tri-Cities Food Bank - Richland



Ten years ago a fire allowed Tri-Cities Food Bank, Richland (TCFB) to build a new facility from the ground up. Given this opportunity they sought to create the best possible food bank — food enters through the rear and leaves through the front. Customers arrive and enter a large waiting room where TCFB offers resource and referral information. People are then invited into a small, private side room for intake. For the physical food distribution, TCFB offers a shopping experience — customers shop up and down aisles selecting food from many available choices. “It makes them feel in control of the process and gives them dignity,” comments Executive Director John Neill. In the back of the building is a large warehouse where food is received, with a loading dock and forklift. TCFB’s Kennewick site has a similar layout, and they are now planning to replace the smaller Benton City location with a new, similar facility.

What it Takes: The biggest requirement to lay your food bank out like TCFB is lots of floor space. TCFB also boasts a large walk-in freezer and refrigerator, which allows them to serve a greater variety of foods. While not every food bank has this kind of space, for those that do, setting up a store-like environment with aisles, and providing a comfortable waiting area are great design features.

Super Freeze: Combining Resources to Build Capacity

Kitsap County Food Bank Coalition - Bremerton



To meet a common need for additional freezer space, members of the Kitsap County Food Bank Coalition pooled their EFAP proviso funds and put the money toward a large walk-in freezer to be owned by and located at Bremerton Foodline (BF). While BF owns the freezer, participating coalition members contribute to the operating costs of the freezer. The freezer has a separate electric meter, and BF invoices participating food banks for a one-eighth share of energy costs each quarter, plus \$25 per quarter toward a shared maintenance fund. The money is actually remitted to the coalition and then BF is reimbursed. Monica Bernhard, Director, says the formula is designed to recover costs, and that BF does not make any money toward overhead or other costs unrelated to the freezer itself. The freezer benefits everyone, allowing for bulk donations and purchases, and providing a back-up in case an individual food bank’s freezer goes on the fritz. Not every coalition member participates in cost-sharing, because some boards were unwilling to commit either EFAP funds at the time of purchase or ongoing cost-sharing. In spite of this, use of the freezer is open to all organizations recognizing the community benefit.

What it Takes: A significant shared purchase like this requires advance planning. You will need to get commitments from each agency board. In this case, BF took the lead in presenting a proposal to the coalition for the capital investment and the cost recovery plan. This information was in turn presented to members’ boards. Even though not everyone chose to participate, they were able to get a quorum to proceed, with BF investing additional funds beyond what other partners could.

Ingenuity: DIY Tools

Community Services of Moses Lake, Inc - Moses Lake



Community Services of Moses Lake, Inc. (CSML) has created a slip-sheet attachment to help unload truckloads of food not on pallets, such as USDA cereal. The cereal came in on a slip sheet — a thick sheet of cardboard — and needed to be dragged off the truck and placed onto a pallet. CSML did some research and discovered that the standard solution for pulling slip sheets, a special attachment for a fork lift, costs \$5,000. “I had a vision and talked to a friend of mine that’s a retired machinist. Together we’ve created a slip sheet puller/clamp for about \$45 that’s worked like a charm,” says Penny Archer, Operations Manager.

What it Takes: Ingenuity is the main requirement to design a new tool. In this case, Archer had a vision and was able to communicate what she needed to a machinist who could fabricate the tool from existing tools — a vice grip and an angle iron. Archer also reports that others can benefit from their experience, since the fabricator says he would be more than happy to build one for other food banks --but you have to come to Moses Lake to pick it up!

Partner, not Donor

Coastal Harvest - Hoquiam



Coastal Harvest recently received a grant from the Grays Harbor Community Foundation, not as simply a donor to our organization but rather as a partner. We approached the foundation with a proposal to build an ongoing relationship that was different than the traditional relationship between a donor and a recipient.

We asked for the GHCF to work with us to provide fork trucks for our facility. But first, we asked them to look at the issue from the eyes of the nonprofit. We all tend to buy used equipment and run it into the ground—we often just don’t have the funds to do proper upkeep. So when a fork truck starts having trouble, we spend money...and then spend more and more trying to keep it alive. By the time the trouble becomes serious we are bleeding money into this equipment. Traditionally, this is the point at which we seek help from a foundation in the form of a grant to buy another used truck.

The problem is that we are too late. Even if you buy a good used fork truck, your budget is already in the hole trying to fix the old one. There was no time to shop around or seek a deal on a truck, you needed to get one ASAP and put it to work. The cycle begins anew because now you have a used truck and a tight budget means you’ll tend to shortchange the maintenance on your “new” truck. We asked the GHCF to help us break that cycle.

The proposal we submitted was for a multi-year grant. The first phase was to bring our existing fleet up to minimum safety standards to help us in the short term. The next phase was to help us to buy new trucks in the longer term. But we did more than just ask for money. We asked for the foundation to expect more of us than they usually would. For them to be partners, they needed to know that we were spending their dollars as if they were our own. They needed to set an expectation that we would take the responsibility of maintaining the new equipment in a way that would ensure maximum lifespan. Simply put, we asked them to trust us to also be a good partner as we managed their donation and requested that they hold our feet to the fire to do just that.

By finding the best deal we can for our new trucks, by adhering carefully to maintenance schedules and treating our equipment as our own, we believe we can make the most of the funds provided. By asking for open communication and for the foundation to take an interest in how we do these things, we believe they will see this partnership as beneficial and will want to continue it into the future. Together, we will break the cycle of the peaks and valleys of most grantor/grantee relationships where an agency quickly spends the monies given, has zero incentive to care for the equipment and then simply asks for another replacement down the road. Together, we’ll squeeze every ounce of benefit from every dollar and make the funds given by the GHCF a true investment in our community.

Enticing Skilled Volunteers to Work for You

Friends in Service to Him (FISH) Food Banks of Pierce County Tacoma



FISH Food Banks of Pierce County knew they needed technology assistance, and decided to put out a call for interns at the local community colleges. Instead of a student intern, FISH Food Banks lucked out when Tacoma Community College’s Director of Information Technology responded to their notice. She has installed computers, made technology improvements at a number of their eight sites, and is developing a program to track customer information.

What it Takes: Beth Elliott, Executive Director, highly recommends connecting with your local college to find a computer literate person who can assist your organization with customized solutions.

STRENGTHENING BOARD LEADERSHIP

Deep Roots: Building a Community-Connected Board Toppenish Community Chest - Toppenish



Toppenish Community Chest (TCC) established itself as an independent community organization just four years ago. Prior to that, the local food bank had run under the auspices of several area churches. A few short years later, they are well-known in the community and have a new facility funded by a successful capital campaign. Cecelia Chavez, Executive Director, is clear about how vital the board of directors is to TCC's success. "If you have a core group of at least 10 active, working people thinking ahead and using their connections, you can get somewhere," Chavez says. TCC's board consists of 15 people from different backgrounds

— farmers, schools teachers, the CEO of the Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic, and so on. "Each member has an entity behind them, so they have extra help. Every time we choose a new member, it's something to do with a community service in town. This way, they can access more help, and more people know about the food bank. For example, farmers get us fresh fruit, and our teacher organizes the local school to do a food drive."

Because they want committed, active members, TCC has a thoughtful recruitment process which includes an in-person presentation of the food bank's work to the board candidate, covering "what we have done and what we expect from them." Expectations include working in the food bank at least monthly, and organizing one fundraising event per year. If there is a match, the new person is voted in. TCC feels it is important for board members to spend time at the food bank itself, sorting groceries or doing other daily work. This allows them to know what is really going on at TCC. Chavez adds, "When they see that the work they do pays off, they get interested in doing more. They see the customers getting help. It is working for us."

What it Takes: To build a strong board, it is important to have a thoughtful recruitment process, and be honest about what is required of board members. At TCC, community connections are a key requirement for new board members, and this strategy has extended their reach in the community. TCC has established a strong board culture that promotes service and accountability. Aspects of this culture include setting clear, specific expectations for board members, maintaining a focus on the organization's mission and accomplishments so that board members feel they are making a difference, and ensuring that board members have supportive organizations backing them up.

RECRUITING AND MANAGING VOLUNTEERS

One Call: Centralizing Volunteer Coordination Hopelink - Redmond



Hopelink has six food bank locations, and centralizes their volunteer coordination. The volunteer coordinator, located in their central office, processes all new volunteer applications. This provides a consistent system in terms of who gets approved as a volunteer, keeps applications in one place, and takes some of the work of volunteer management away from food bank staff. For example, the volunteer coordinator handles background checks on new volunteers, and schedules volunteer orientations. "I only have to worry about scheduling," says Teresa Andrade, Food Bank Coordinator, Northshore Hopelink.

What it Takes: This system works best for a larger organization with multiple sites and enough volunteers to justify a coordinator position.

Start Early: Utilizing High School Volunteers

Wapato Food Bank - Wapato



Wapato Food Bank works with the local high school to actively recruit volunteers. Students need community service hours, and the school principal is willing to provide a list of students who need to fulfill hours and their phone numbers. Roy Cardenas, Basic Food Educator, calls the students directly and invites them to work at the food bank. “The extra manpower is great,” says Cardenas. “We usually have elderly women as volunteers, and it’s hard for them to lift 50 pound bags of beans and rice. I was picking up a lot of heavy items, and thought it would be nice to have help!” The students come in on an as needed basis, and are particularly helpful around the holidays. No extra supervision is necessary, and the school seems to select kids who are easy to manage.

What it Takes: Establishing a relationship with a school and having a designated person who can call students and schedule their shifts.

Rethinking Support: Celebrating Volunteers

Hood Canal Food Bank - Hoodspport



Two of the larger churches in the Hoodspport community have a luncheon for volunteers and customers of the Hood Canal Food Bank (HCFB) to celebrate them. All are welcome. HCFB provides some of the food and the church members bring other things, like salads. “It has been so successful! The people that come to the food bank really look forward to it – once a month they can go and have a nice lunch,” reports Director Kathy Roberson. The luncheon is set up in the church, and the pastor comes and sits down with people at lunch. “It’s just once a month, but it’s meaningful to the people, and also the volunteers. It gives them camaraderie. They’re not just working, they’re also relaxing together.”

What it Takes: Community partner to host the luncheon, volunteers to cook and serve. Could be started on a quarterly basis at first.

Increasing Volunteer Workforce

Good Cheer Food Bank - South Whidbey Island



With the economy struggling, it has been hard to increase food and financial donations at the same rate that needs are increasing for food bank customers. People continue to want to help, however, and the efficient and effective use of their offers to volunteer can make a significant difference in the service provided to the community. Last year Good Cheer Food Bank was able to significantly increase the number of volunteer hours provided through a combination of public outreach and volunteer coordination.

Good Cheer Food Bank serves a unique community including the cities of Langley, Clinton, Freeland, Bayview, and Greenbank. South Whidbey Island is growing in population, yet local wages are lower than many parts of the state. High costs of living mean that more people are turning to Good Cheer to help make up the difference between their paycheck and putting food on the table.

In 2010, Good Cheer provided food for up to 25% of the local population. Early in the year we found that the number of new customers was growing faster than the rate of food and monetary donations. One way to reduce non-food expenses is to increase the amount of service hours provided by community volunteers.

What It Takes: Good Cheer uses a number of strategies to increase the number of useful volunteer hours. To replicate this program, any or all of them can be used by similar food banks around the state. With these strategies in place volunteer hours increased from 26,366 in 2009 to 32,737 in 2010.

- **Recruitment and Training:** In addition to our general public awareness outreach, Good Cheer makes specific appeals for volunteers on a regular basis. Recruitment and training includes a volunteer job description, brochures, application

forms, training video, and an annually updated volunteer handbook.

- Coordination: It takes resources to effectively utilize resources, and this year we saw a great return from our designation of a staff member as Volunteer Coordinator. We utilize technology in the form of our Salesforce data base to record hours and to send out email blasts to our volunteers to announce needs. Although paying a staff member to coordinate volunteers takes funding, the rewards are great – Good Cheer volunteers donated hours equaled to 20 Full Time Employees in 2010.
- Communication: Volunteers need to know their work is appreciated, and they need to feel part of the overall mission and activity of the food bank. Good Cheer provides a newsletter specifically for volunteers three times a year. Volunteer Forums are held quarterly where we specifically ask for their feedback in how to improve service to our customers or to help meet their volunteer needs. Forums are also used for team building, to provide training and share business information. Once a year volunteers are asked to participate in a satisfaction survey, in which we use the feedback to improve our program.
- Rewards: Although volunteers don't ask for rewards, they do appreciate being thanked and Good Cheer makes sure to thank volunteers often in person, through events specifically for the volunteers, personally with thank-you cards or emails and publically through printed materials, on our web-site, on Facebook, or in our BLOG posts. In addition, this year Good Cheer has partnered with Something-To-Give as a way to analyze volunteer data to help improve our program.

Focusing on the recruitment and retention plus the effective & efficient use of volunteers is of utmost importance in these days of high need and low finances. In 2010 Good Cheer wages increased by 1.2%, during the same time volunteer hours greatly increased, from 26,366 in 2009 to 32,737 this year – an increase of 24%. The number of volunteer hours donated is financially equivalent to more than \$685,000, or 20 full time staff employees.

By actively, strategically, and efficiently using community volunteers we are making the most use of this donated resource. The volunteer labor allows us the ability to utilize financial donations to more direct costs such as food. Ultimately, more needy people are able to receive food to support their family.

The major steps we have taken to make sure our agency is making efficient use of our resources are:

- Implementing a point system, and refining it when needed to ensure we can provide nutritious food to a growing customerele
- Creating a garden on food bank land to grow our own produce
- Utilizing volunteers to increase service while reducing expenses

This project is a “best practice” because strategically utilizing community volunteers allows us to provide a better level of service to the hungry in our community. In addition to allowing us to feed more people for a cheaper cost, this program is easily replicable for food banks throughout the region.

By increasing the number of volunteer hours you are also strengthening your team (your organization) and involving more individuals in your work. As an added benefit it also provides an opportunity for food banks customers that choose to give back to an organization that is also serving them.

Top three answers when asked why do you volunteer?

- To help others
- Good Cheer's mission (To create a hunger-free community)
- To use free time constructively

An example of a best practice is when you can increase your revenues by 12.9% while increase you expense by only 2.6%. That is bottom line numbers on Good Cheer's 2010 Profit & Loss Comparison over the previous year. The strongest contributor to making that possible was increasing the amount of volunteer hours by 24%.

*In 2011, 1.7 million Washington volunteers dedicated 218.9 million hours of service. Nearly 22 percent of all volunteers either collected, prepared, distributed or served food.
(source: Volunteering in America)*

Unexpected Partners: Working with Inmate Crews & Court-Mandated Volunteers

Lewis County Food Bank Coalition - Centralia



Lewis County Food Bank Coalition (LCFBC) utilizes inmate labor from the county jail's inmate release program. These inmates work shifts at the food bank and must be supervised by trained volunteers. LCFBC picks up the inmates at the jail for their shift, and returns them to the jail at the end of the workday. "We decided to do it because the inmates are good workers, and most of our volunteers are older, and we're able to always know that we can have four pretty able-bodied people there all day to load and unload, clean, and help us with light maintenance in the warehouse. It's a matter of free, good, reliable, consistent labor work," says Bonnie Pedersen, Coalition Treasurer. For the inmates, the work provides an opportunity to get out and be exposed to a positive work environment. For some, it is their first experience of volunteering. They have been very good workers, and LCFBC depends on their contributions to keep their food bank running. When they moved, volunteers from the jail contributed professional skills such as painting and carpentry as well.

What it Takes: Inmate volunteers must be supervised at all times. The Sheriff's Department provides training to LCFBC volunteers who will be providing supervision, and it is important to follow the Sheriff Department's guidelines. LCFBC provides meals for the volunteers during their shift. Transportation must also be provided. LCFBC generally has a crew of four inmates come for each shift, so a volunteer usually picks them up using an LCFBC van. The first step is to establish a relationship with the Sheriff's Department or equivalent public agency in your area.

Tips from the Field for Managing Volunteers

- Set clear expectations for volunteers. The Salvation Army (SA) in Anacortes has a written volunteer agreement that outlines expectations of volunteers, such as notifying SA in advance if they are unable to work a shift, signing in and out, attending training and protecting customer confidentiality. They also use a volunteer orientation checklist.
- Pay attention to group dynamics. At Bainbridge's Helpline House, the volunteer coordinators have noticed that volunteers stay involved and enjoy their work more when they feel they are part of a cohesive team. They watch for personality matches and try to group people that work well together.
- Convey your values and philosophy to volunteers during training. Helpline House has also developed written materials to help communicate their approach and values to volunteers. The following is excerpted from their handout about communications:

What do we want to communicate?

- The interdependence of those in the human community ("No man is an island")
- The dignity and worth of every human being (Acceptance)
- The validity of asking for help (All of us have problems some of the time.)
- The need to give as well as to receive (Each has the ability to be contributing members of our community.)
- The recognition of the difficulty in making systems work
- The need for information, time and attention to solve problems and make choices
- The assurance that information shared will be confidential
- The role is of a concerned neighbor (Peer)

What we can offer is time, attention, accurate information, connections and a way to feel worthwhile.

- Deal directly with the issue of hungry volunteers! Agencies develop different policies regarding having customers volunteer — some swear by it, and other believe it is best not to have individuals wear both hats. The most important thing is to clarify and communicate your organization's policy.
- At SA Anacortes, volunteers are given the agency's policy in writing, stating in part: "Volunteers are strictly prohibited from retaining food items for themselves. If there is a volunteer who is in need of assistance they are invited to fill out the proper paperwork during hours of operation. No individual will be denied food assistance, however, they do need to

follow the proper channels.”

- St. Leo's Food Connection (SLFC) Director Kevin Glackin-Coley comments, “The best thing and the toughest thing about working here is that we have volunteers from the community in need. It is what allows us to keep our doors open long hours, and it keeps the face of hunger right in front of us.” To recognize volunteers and also to reduce the temptation to take food during volunteer shifts, SLFC has instituted a shopping policy that anyone who works more than 10 hours per two week period can get an extra shopping period. However, they also make it clear that people can't do shopping as food comes in, taking what they want.

Whatever your organization's policy, it's important to remind volunteers of the rules regularly, to reduce temptation and opportunity to steal food, and to ask people who violate your policy to leave.

- Recognize and adapt to changing volunteer trends. With more baby boomers delaying retirement and more competing demands on people's time, food banks have trouble recruiting volunteers willing to work one or several shifts per week as has been customary in past years. Patricia King, Pantry Shelf Director comments, “When I first started, people were working every Tuesday or every Friday. It's been increasingly hard to get people to sign up for every week. I started asking people for one shift a month, and they knew they could trade their shift if needed. We attract more volunteers with this flexible system.”
- Celebrate! Recognize your volunteers in large and small ways. Social events such as an annual volunteer recognition luncheon, a birthday party for a long-term volunteer, or holiday celebration can help build community among your volunteers.

Fresh and Healthful Options: Connections to Fresh Food for Your Customers

This section is an all-new addition to our 2012 Edition of this manual. Both the need and the opportunity for fresh foods in the emergency food system has been clear to Washington Food Coalition in recent years. In 2011 and 2012, in partnership with WSDA and Rotary First Harvest, Washington Food Coalition hosted the Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits as a launching point for efforts to meet this need.

Summary from the Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits:

1 in 6 people in Washington struggle with hunger. Meanwhile, our state boasts 39,500 farms and ranches, with excess local food going to waste daily. More than a hunger problem, we have a connection and distribution problem. The Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits were designed to help remedy this problem.

Using funds from the WSDA Specialty Crop Block Grant, WSDA Food Assistance Programs has partnered with Washington Food Coalition and Rotary First Harvest to host four Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits across Washington to bring the emergency food community together with local specialty crop farmers and their commodity commissions. The summits helped these groups learn how their businesses intersect and potential options for growth.



Over the years, Washington food producers have worked with many hunger relief organizations to help combat hunger in our State. The Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits were designed to bring together these organizations to share ideas and insights about ways that farmers, processors, packers and hunger relief organizations can more effectively work together to alleviate hunger in our communities. Food banks, meal programs and other groups across the state are working to increase the amount of Washington-produced foods that are available, and they need meaningful connections with producers to identify opportunities that are both effective and sustainable. This innovation and collaboration is critical as the number of families facing hunger continues to grow in Washington due to the current recession.

Each of the Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits provided many unique insights and opportunities to see growth in these connections. We found that the opportunities to increase relations between local growers and local emergency food programs in mutually beneficial ways were seemingly endless.

At the Harvest Against Hunger (HAH) Wenatchee Area Summit in September, the issues of storage and transportation were highlighted as barriers to collaborate on and overcome somehow. The HAH Yakima Area Summit in January offered insightful discussion into the opportunity of one-to-one connections between small-scale farmers and local food programs. At the HAH Olympia Area Summit in February, ideas were shared on how emergency food programs can reach out and market themselves to local growers. Later in February, at the HAH Seattle Area Summit, discussions arose about educating youth on how to grow food, as well as ideas on how to make small-scale farming more economically viable.

It was also evident that certain issues and ideas continued to arise at each HAH Summit, no matter where in the state it was held. The utilization of Food Hub (food-hub.org) to locate and connect with food sources had a large amount of interest. The development of materials and tools addressing liability as well as methods of donations to provide to growers was discussed widely. Understanding individual growers and the best way to tap into their production line is another discussion that was brought up statewide. In addition, the opportunity for emergency food programs to position themselves as a paying customer whenever it is possible was an idea that provided opportunity for long-term sustainability in these relationships. These ideas, along with many others, were clearly applicable in all areas of the state.

While this series of Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits proved to be incredibly useful and exciting, they most definitely provided more of a launching point than a finish line. The journey to connecting local growers with local emergency food programs is far from over. There is much work to be done to take the ideas from the Harvest Against Hunger Area Summits and turn them into practical, sustainable systems. The opportunities for the richness that could result from a food system that utilizes these ideas, however, is truly inspiring.

Keeping it Fresh: Farmers Market Vouchers

University District Food Bank - Seattle



University District Food Bank (UDFB) is lucky to have the well-established University District Farmers Market as a neighbor. The two organizations have developed a program which allows the food bank to distribute farmers market vouchers to customers. Customers are offered three \$2 vouchers (for a total of \$6) once a month from May through October. The vouchers can be redeemed at any vendor for fruit, vegetables, honey, fish or other foods. Vendors use the vouchers toward their stall fees, and the Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance – organizers of the market – requests reimbursement from UDFB once a month. The program ensures that people who use UDFB have greater access to fresh, high quality and nutritious foods. “This is a way for us to make sure that folks are getting produce that is most relevant to their needs – produce that means something to them,” says Executive Director Joe Gruber. “It’s also a way for us to give back to the market and the vendors that support us with donations.”

UDFB sets a budget for voucher reimbursement each year, and monitors the rate of reimbursements throughout the year to stay on target. One of the tricky things about budgeting is that only about one third of vouchers issued are actually redeemed. Also, some customers may save up vouchers for several months before shopping. UDFB’s program has grown to \$8,500 in reimbursements per year, and about half the funds come from grants and targeted donations by organizations that love the program. Donations from Puget Consumers Coop (PCC) and the Kiwanis Club helped start the program years ago.

What it Takes: A program like this requires a strong commitment from the partnering farmers market. Talk to your local market’s organizers to find out if they are interested and able to support a program. The Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance makes sure that its vendors are comfortable participating. Farmers and market organizers have to trust that they will be reimbursed quickly, and outreach will need to be done initially to establish that trust and willingness to accept vouchers. Also, make sure the people coming to your food bank want to participate. UDFB’s customers find the University District Farmers Market accessible, but other food banks have tried to replicate the program with lesser results, perhaps because their customers aren’t able to travel to the market easily on market day or because the voucher amount offered isn’t significant enough to warrant the trip. UDFB does make an effort to create a voucher that is hard to counterfeit (dark colored paper, changes color each season, and a special stamp on the back), although they haven’t had any trouble in this area. Design and printing of the vouchers is a minimal cost. Consider how you will market the program to customers, especially if they speak multiple languages.

Getting Real: “Eat Real Food” Campaign

Meals Partnership Coalition - Seattle



Meals Partnership Coalition (MPC) is a long-standing coalition of meal programs in the Seattle area. The coalition has evolved over the years from a network that provided a forum for support and information sharing among meal program staff, to advocating in the public policy arena. One of MPC’s most important programs is the “Eat Real Food” campaign which encourages donors and programs to donate and utilize local, fresh, whole foods. The campaign educates donors about the value of healthful foods and the dangers of irradiated, genetically modified, and other less natural and fresh food. Donors are then asked to buy local and “buy from the top of the bin rather than the bottom.” The campaign also encourages meal program providers to do such things as improve their standards by using whole grains, replacing yogurt with sour cream to reduce fat, and checking existing shelf items for adverse chemical ingredients.

What it Takes: In order to launch a similar campaign in your area, it helps to garner support from the whole community. Collaboration and relationship building in the non-profit, public and private sectors is necessary to make changes happen. MPC Chair Krista Grimm comments, “When you can get public and private agencies to come to the table, that’s when great things happen.”

“V” — for Vegetable, for Victory

Bellingham Food Bank - Bellingham



Bellingham Food Bank's (BFB) “Victory Garden Food Drive” encourages home gardeners to bring extra produce to the food bank. The home garden donation program helps BFB serve hungry people by significantly increasing the availability of fresh produce for customers. BFB raises awareness of the program and promotes local food security through distribution of simple brochures and promotional materials to local gardening businesses and community groups. In 2005, BFB received over 20,000 pounds of food donated by Whatcom County home gardeners. The Victory Garden program has substantially increased the amount of fresh produce donated to families during summer and fall months. “We didn’t decide to do it so much as it was done to us,” comments Mike Cohen, Executive Director. “We were receiving a lot of produce from gardens, and treated it like regular donations. Then the editor of The Bellingham Business Journal got interested, and he decided to give it a shape, a name and sponsorship. It’s a wonderful way to get fresh produce in and to involve another segment of the community in our work.”

What it Takes: Cohen stresses the importance of convenience for donors, and recommends that the receiving agency be open for donation drop-offs at least five days a week. You need people power to manage and sort donations, and the ability to distribute produce while still fresh. Once you have the logistics handled, it is important to conduct outreach to educate the community about the need for fresh produce. Remember that this message is counter to the usual one of “donate your non-perishables,” so you’ll be shifting messages and changing expectations. Garden shops, local events and farmers markets are good avenues to reach home gardeners, and local press and radio coverage will help as well.

Bringing it Together: Lettuce Link

Lettuce Link, Solid Ground - Seattle



The primary goal of Solid Ground’s Lettuce Link (LL) program is to connect people with limited incomes to fresh, organic, locally grown produce. A secondary benefit of the program is that it engages people in understanding and fighting hunger. They do this in many ways.

One way is by encouraging and supporting urban P-Patch — Seattle’s community gardens — gardeners to grow extra and glean from their own garden plots to share with food banks. Last year, through the efforts of P-Patch gardeners 28,000 lbs. of fresh produce was distributed to over 30 participating emergency food providers. To do this, LL meets with gardeners each year, contacting them regularly through the growing season, and solicits

participation from emergency food providers. Emergency food provider participation rests in part on proximity to the garden and availability to receive donations. Depending on P-Patch location, gardeners will either work collectively or individually with emergency food providers. LL also provides the seeds, plant starts, and logistic support to help gardeners get started, which helps ensure programs receive desired items. “Ideally, we plant the seed with the gardeners, and then they develop the relationship with the food bank, shelter, or meal program. In some gardens, all I do is provide seeds, others need more support,” says Michelle B. Benetua, Program Manager.

Additionally, LL has developed a number of other innovative projects which increase public awareness about hunger and promote food security. Through the community fruit tree harvest project, volunteers glean fruit from neighborhood trees, which would otherwise go to waste, and donate to emergency food providers. LL encourages self-sufficiency by showing people how to grow their own vegetables, and by visiting local food banks multiple times with free seeds, gardening information and plant starts. These services are especially utilized by recent immigrants.

At Marra Farm, 4-acres of preserved historic farmland, LL has established a 3/4 acre Giving Garden where volunteers and elementary school children learn about sustainable agriculture by raising organic vegetables for the neighborhood food bank, Providence Regina House. Since the neighborhood has a large Latino population, the Giving Garden grows tomatoes, peppers,

cilantro, and tomatillos, in addition to other crops that grow well in Seattle. A major benefit of all of LL's projects is that they involve different parts of the community in hunger issues; engaging people who enjoy fresh, local food and want to share.

What it Takes: The main requirement to get a program like Lettuce Link started in your community is to identify an existing organization or individual to connect with different parts of the community. Participating in gardening events and service clubs is a great way to start.

Linking with Growers

Hunger-Free Thurston County - Olympia



Hunger-Free Thurston County is a focused coalition consisting of two local growers, Thurston County Food Bank, and the Gleaner's Coalition. The growers are Garden Raised Bounty (GRuB), a program that works with at-risk youth and promotes farming and gardening, and Left Food Organics, a program that employs people with disabilities in working a small farm. Both are well-connected with other local growers, including farmers, home gardeners and special projects such as the Kiwanis Food Bank Garden. The coalition was initiated by GRuB in conjunction with a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant-funded project, and designed to outlast the grant period. A major benefit of Hunger Free Thurston County is that GRuB hosts a growers meeting each winter that brings growers together and provides a forum for TCFB to say, "Please don't grow zucchini, we can use corn, winter produce, and other items." At the growers' meeting, everyone is encouraged to fill out a one-page commitment form that states how much they plan to grow of what plants for donation to TCFB. This helps TCFB know what to expect and make sure they don't receive too much of the same thing.

What it Takes: Hunger-Free Thurston County is a small, strategic coalition between growers, gleaners and emergency food providers. Be clear regarding the strategic goal of your coalition, allow the goal to dictate membership, and stay focused.

Giving Gardens

Marysville Community Food Bank - Marysville



We have a wonderful partnership with a local nursery, Sunnyside Nursery. The nursery has tied its years of doing business to an award offered to Giving Gardens donors. The nursery has been in business for 64 years. This year donors of garden grown fruits and veggies who donate 64 or more pounds to the Food Bank will receive a \$25 gift certificate for Sunnyside Nursery for 2013.

We have made wonderful connections with local high school horticulture programs as well as other nurseries who donate plant starts to the Food Bank. We offer these starts to customers to kick-start their own gardens.

Other clubs and groups have gotten involved in supporting the Giving Gardens program. The local Kiwanis are now tending a couple of pea patch plots to grow produce for us. We have a men's bible study group that helps maintain six plots that our Volunteer Coordinator (and Giving Gardens lead) manages, and we have Scouts troops and a school group that have gardens raising produce for us. And, we have a local business in town whose employees have tilled up a large section of their property and are raising veggies for the program.

All this benefits our customers in providing them fresh, locally grown food options.

Farmer's Market Gleaning

Broadway Farmers Market & Community Lunch Meal Program - Seattle



In 2010, Jewish Family Service (JFS) and Community Lunch, a Capitol Hill meal program, began a partnership to glean from the Broadway Farmers Market on Sunday evenings. The gleaning effort is part of an overall goal of increasing customer's access to healthy foods including fresh fruits and vegetables. A partnership between JFS and Community Lunch was necessary because gleaning happens on a Sunday afternoon and it is staff and volunteer intensive, sharing the responsibility made gleaning feasible for both organizations. JFS has one staff member, currently an AmeriCorps*VISTA, who is responsible for organizing the volunteers for gleaning and being at JFS Sunday afternoons to receive the produce and ensure it is stored properly. The 2011 gleaning season brought 5,000 lbs of fresh produce into the food bank.

What it Takes: Successfully creating and maintaining a Farmers' Market Gleaning program has multiple steps and details. To maximize the impact of the partnership we have found the following steps helpful:

- 1) Identify a Farmers Market that is not yet partnered with a gleaning organization and make contact with them to gauge their interest in gleaning
- 2) Recruit dependable volunteers well in advance of gleaning days – and then recruit subs in case volunteers need to miss a gleaning day.
- 3) Get your materials ready! This includes everything from Farmer's Market Vendor Recruitment materials to volunteer procedures.
- 4) Plan your logistics. Who will go? What time? How will food get transported back to the food bank?
- 5) Nutrition! Some gleaned foods will likely be unfamiliar to food bank customers. Be prepared to provide recipes and information about what you have gleaned.
- 6) Communicate actively. With vendors, the farmers market organizer, and your volunteers
- 7) Documentation. To report poundage and for vendor and volunteer thank you letters.

Gleaning is more complicated than it may appear at first glance. As part of an AmeriCorps Vista project JFS compiled a gleaning guide to help other organizations successfully glean from Farmers Markets, including samples of forms and documentation. The Glean Guide can be accessed on our website at: http://www.jfsseattle.org/uploads/pdf/JFS_MarketGleaning_Final.pdf

Healthy Food Gift Certificates

White Center Food Bank - Seattle



Access to healthy, fresh foods in neighborhoods that are low-income is a well-documented issue. In meetings with the White Center Community Development Association (CDA) during early 2010, we determined that by working together we could improve access to produce for our clients while also assisting in the economic development of our community by creating the Healthy Food Gift Certificate Program. This program fulfills our mission completely as it a) minimizes hunger by providing greater access to healthy foods; b) nourishes an entire community – in collaborating with local markets and the CDA to put the program together a wide range of our community benefits economically while our clients are being nourished; c) the program nurtures self-reliance as it teaches clients where to find produce that is affordable, close-to-home while emphasizing that produce is an important part of regular nutrition; and d) our rich cultural diversity is embraced – by partnering with local, immigrant owned markets our clients can find produce that is familiar to them which their families want as part of their regular diets. Our clients are the fourth element of the project – prior to launching the Healthy Food Gift Certificate Program we met with client groups to ascertain their needs as to produce, determine their current access and barriers to obtaining produce.

Each WCFB household receives one \$5 Healthy Food Gift Certificate per month. A May 2012 purchase at one of our markets showed that \$5 would purchase 8.5 pounds of produce while \$5 at a mainline store purchased only 2.5 pounds. With each gift certificate redemption client households also receives a one or two pound produce gift from the market and any additional cash purchases are also tracked. Currently, our redemption rate is 76% - clients may use the gift certificates upon receipt or they may save them for larger purchases for holidays or special meals. This percentage equates to 85,000 pounds of produce provided in 2011.

The Healthy Food Gift Certificate Program uniquely pairs hunger relief and economic development. Nearly \$60,000 per year is invested in our local business community through gift certificate redemption and additional purchases by food bank clients at our three partner markets. By partnering with the White Center Community Development Association (which handles all administrative costs) the program is financially a sound fit for both agencies. All around, the Healthy Food Gift Certificate Program is a unique partnership that is highly replicable in other communities.

Gleaning Resource Guides by Rotary First Harvest



Rotary First Harvest (RFH) is leading an effort to connect food banks, growers and volunteers around Washington State to fight food insecurity.

In 2011, RFH positioned 10 AmeriCorps*VISTA in hunger relief agencies around Washington to bolster these efforts and either create or support programs that brought local surplus produce into these agencies. Each VISTA then documented their projects, progress, and lessons into a report at the end of their year-long term. These reports are so full of helpful insight, lessons learned, and best practices that we've included them in their entirety in this manual.

The reports can be accessed through an easy-to-use interactive online guide with downloadable sample files at www.rfhresourceguide.org

Gleaning Resource Guide #1: Pierce County Gleaning Project

At Emergency Food Network

By AmeriCorps*VISTA Ellen Mickle

History

Jesuit Volunteer started the Pierce County Gleaning Project (PCGP) in 2010 at St. Leo's Food Connection, (St. Leo's), a large food bank located in downtown Tacoma. In the past, Washington State University (WSU) Extension had run a gleaning program in Pierce County, but that ended in the early 2000s, making the PCGP the first organized gleaning effort in Pierce County in years. In late fall of 2010, the PCGP grew with the placement of an AmeriCorps*VISTA gleaning coordinator at Emergency Food Network (EFN), a food bank distributor in Lakewood, WA. EFN has been part of the local community since 1982, supplying up to 80 percent of the food given out by the 67 food banks in Pierce County, and is working toward the goal of supplying its partner food banks with 60 percent fresh produce. With access to the resources of EFN and St. Leo's, the PCGP has quickly grown to help meet the needs of its county, in which 147,000 individuals visit food banks or hot meal sites every month.

In its first year, the Pierce County Gleaning Project was focused on an urban fruit tree harvest and gleaning the downtown farmers market. The PCGP expanded in its second year to include a larger fruit tree harvest in Tacoma, gleaning from farms as well as farmers markets, and a Plant a Row for the Hungry campaign for county gardeners. As the Jesuit Volunteer gleaning position at St. Leo's is no longer available, the PCGP is currently run by the AmeriCorps*VISTA Gleaning Coordinator and PCGP volunteers. Through its expanded focus and numerous community outreach events, the PCGP is becoming an important part of its community emergency food system.

Volunteer Relations

Volunteer outreach and retention have been the most challenging aspects of the PCGP. However, by employing the strategies discussed below, the PCGP has cultivated a dedicated volunteer base needed to expand its impact.

...► Volunteer Recruitment

The coordinator conducted general outreach by hanging posters, posting on volunteer websites, and getting stories in newsletters for like-minded groups. Additionally, the coordinator worked with volunteer centers at local universities and community colleges to post PCGP volunteer listings. The coordinator also tabled regularly at farmers markets

and made announcements at meetings for local organizations focused on community service and agriculture, such as Rotary clubs, neighborhood councils, local food policy councils, and fruit growers' associations. Also, the coordinator worked with the Jesuit Volunteer in Spring of 2011 to host numerous community engagement events, including starting a monthly gleaning discussion group at a local independent book store, hosting fruit tree care demonstrations, a food justice panel discussion at a local university, a cooking demo at the St. Leo's Food Connection, and even a film showing in partnership with the local food co-op.

→ **Volunteer Intake and Training (see photo here)**

As a result of these efforts, over 170 individuals have signed up to volunteer, and over 70 individuals have volunteered at least once. Volunteer intake consists of filling out an application online or on paper if in-person. Two fruit tree harvest training sessions were offered at public libraries in July 2011 to cover safety and technique (see training fact sheet here). Topics covered: how orchard ladders are designed for being on the grass and must not be used on hard surfaces, such as driveways, and how to pick an apple without damaging the fruiting spur. Volunteers who started later were trained onsite. Farm gleaning volunteers were trained at a local farm, which grows for food banks, before going to a farm to glean. Harvest training for the crop at hand occurred on-site at the farms being gleaned.

→ **Volunteer Retention**

To encourage volunteer retention, the coordinator regularly thanked volunteers by first name in Facebook posts, sent a mid-season thank you email, and hosted an end of season volunteer appreciation gathering.

→ **Volunteer Relations – Lessons Learned**

The coordinator found that making individual connections with folks who champion the PCGP was essential to building a core of repeat volunteers, and even resulted in building a relationship with a group of volunteers from a local rescue mission. The PCGP's decision to have a "low barrier of entry" for volunteers, including a one page application and subsequent RSVP-as-available model, guaranteed flexibility for volunteers, but also meant there were many one-time volunteers. The coordinator also learned it's not only important to ensure comfort of the volunteers by providing snacks, beverages, and access to bathrooms, but that every new volunteer benefits from a field orientation. Such an orientation included a brief rundown of the program's history, what impact they make volunteering for the PCGP, and a tour of the property if it is a farm, orchard, or garden. This tour was not appropriate or necessary for backyard fruit tree harvests.

Donor Relations

For the PCGP, donors include residential fruit tree owners, farmers, and gardeners for the Plant a Row for the Hungry campaign, each with somewhat different protocol for outreach and retention.

→ **Fruit Tree Donor Relations**

"Registering" fruit tree owners has been interesting because most fruit tree owners the gleaning coordinator connected with were equipped to harvest their own fruit and uninterested in gleaning. To work around this, the PCGP produced postcard-style flyers designed for folks to share with their neighbors who have fruit trees that could benefit from gleaning. In conjunction with other outreach efforts, this has resulted in about a 100 percent increase in the number of fruit tree registrations. Tree owners can register online, on paper or just by calling their tree into the designated call-in number at the St. Leo's office to set up a harvest.

Registered fruit tree owners are tracked in a spreadsheet. To retain fruit tree donors, the PCGP coordinator made reminder emails or calls twice a year; once before the harvest season and once mid-way through to those who hadn't been harvested yet. To show appreciation, the coordinator thanked fruit tree owners in person or left a thank you note with the total pounds picked and where it was delivered.

→ **Farm Donor Relations**

The greatest challenge when approaching farm donors is assuring the farmer they will not be held liable if an accident occurs, or if there is an illness from consuming the gleaned produce. Our assurance is that liability for accidents is not an issue because all volunteers sign a liability waiver. No donor can be held accountable for illnesses that result from consuming donated goods, as specified in the Good Samaritan Law (see overview from Skagit County's Harvest for Hope here).

→ It's recommended to start with a few farm donors in the first year to build trust with the farmers. The best method to find farmers is through a personal connection or introduction. The PCGP was fortunate to have that connection and introduction through two individuals; the farmer at the EFN's Mother Earth food bank farm, and a WSU extension agent. The Mother Earth farmer helped PCGP connect with smaller scale, organic growers by inviting the coordinator

to speak at a spring meeting for Pierce Tilth, an organization of organic and sustainable farmers. WSU extension agents essentially work with their local farmers to apply agricultural knowledge gained from research at the University but also help community members connect with local farmers. The WSU agent informed the coordinator of certain larger scale farmers who may be interested in gleaning. The agent had the preliminary conversation with those farmers before inviting the coordinator to call them and follow up. As a result, the PCGP has built relationships with three local small-scale organic farmers and one large-scale commercial green bean farmer.

When building relationships with farm donors, it is helpful to remember that there are different ways to glean farms. The PCGP gleans farms in three different ways:

1. **Field Gleaning** – small scale farms, including Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) and other farms equipped for outsiders coming onto the farm.
2. **Cull Gleaning** – small to large scale farms, a great way to get leftover market produce from a smaller farm's cooler, and to engage the larger-scale farmer by dropping off boxes for them to fill with non-market grade produce during the harvest.
3. **Farmers Market Gleaning** – great way to capture any excess produce, milk or bread from vendors at farmers markets featuring produce (and not predominantly crafts or prepared foods).

To retain farm donors, it is important to be consistent, bring trained volunteers, and take as little time out of the farmers' day as possible. The PCGP coordinator called the farmers once a week in the height of season to stay on their radar, and showed appreciation with verbal thanks, a donation receipt upon pickup, and an end of season thank you card including how many pounds they donated that year.

→ **Plant-a-Row Gardener Donor Relations**

To connect gardeners with their nearest food banks, the PCGP promoted a Plant a Row for the Hungry campaign – which consisted of giving out free seeds, plant starts, and information on where to donate, based on a survey of the 67 county food banks. The gleaning coordinator wrote letters to local seed producers for donations and distributed over 500 seed packets at all the Pierce County Library branches in the spring of 2011. Donated seeds that needed an early start were grown into 12,000 plants in greenhouses at local schools, farms, and a biosolids treatment plant – which cleans the city's sewage waste and produces a home gardening fertilizer from the solid waste. The plant starts were initially distributed at the Community Gardening Summit in spring of 2011. To get a snapshot of the overall impact gardeners make on alleviating hunger, the gleaning coordinator began working with key food banks to track garden donations on a monthly basis.

The most important part of developing relations with gardeners as donors, is providing a list of where you can donate small amounts of produce. Many gardeners simply don't know that they can walk into a food bank with their produce for donation, so surveying your area food banks to find which food banks are interested is highly recommended.

Visibility

To get the word out about its broad, new project the PCGP used various “out of the box” approaches to reach a wide audience.

→ **Community Engagement Events (see photo here)**

Book club, pruning demo, cooking demo, panel discussion, film showing – you name it, there's a good chance we did it in spring of 2011. In addition to getting the word out to potential volunteers and donors, the greatest benefit from these events was connecting with community partners. Community members were recruited to provide the backbone of every event, by sharing their skills of pruning, cooking, and discussing their experiences with issues related to food waste and hunger. As a newcomer in a temporary position, the PCGP coordinator found it important to utilize the community's “capital” in terms of connections and expertise to build a strong foundation for a community-based project.

Finding those community partners takes a little research. For instance, when seeking individuals to lead fruit tree pruning demos, the PCGP coordinator first contacted the Master Gardener Program coordinator for Pierce County, who was able to contact individuals she knew who might be interested in leading the demos. As a result of these efforts, the PCGP has a strong network of community partners to continue these outreach efforts for the PCGP into the future.

→ **Local Media**

Issuing a press release to the local media outlets is often not enough to get into local papers. It helps to have a professional connection at the paper and a particular event on which to focus. In 2011, the local newspaper covered an orchard glean by the PCGP, partly due to promotion by the marketing director at the non-profit who oversees the orchard (see article here). Furthermore, there is the option of sending a letter to the editor in response to an article

about your organization, or a related issue they ran a story on (see letter response to afore-mentioned article here). TV spots at local stations are another way to get the word out. The PCGP coordinator had a segment with a local county-funded station (view here). Nurturing an organizational connection, like the one EFN has with Pierce County TV helped make this story happen.

To get into like-minded groups' newsletters, often the coordinator need only email the editor of the newsletter with a press release and brief description of why gleaning is relevant to that organization. This was the case with our articles in the Pierce County Conservation District and the Pierce County Solid Waste newsletter (view PCCD newsletter here). Many newsletters go out to hundreds of homes with folks who are interested in the very issues you work on, and are a fantastic way to publicize your work.

Farmers Market Gleaning

In its first year, the PCGP gleaning coordinator tabled and gleaned a weekly farmers market in downtown Tacoma. It was a great way to outreach to local farmers and resulted in 7,300 lbs of gleaned produce, milk and bread for St. Leo's. In its second year, with its expanded focus, the PCGP found it necessary to connect each market with a food bank or hot meal site and encourage the organization to perform the weekly pickup. The downtown farmers market continued to be gleaned by a St. Leo's volunteer, while the two other markets were gleaned by volunteers from nearby food bank and a soup kitchen. There are three general steps to gleaning farmers markets.

1. **Drop off crates:** Before the market starts, and about 15 minutes before the area is closed off to vehicles, a food bank volunteer brings about a dozen milk crates and distributes them to the vendors with produce who might donate. Bread vendors tend to use their own sacks for bagging donations.
2. **Pick up crates:** (see photo here) At the end of the market, once the area is open to vehicles again, the volunteer can drive the van down the street, collecting crates from the vendors. When collecting crates, the volunteer asks the vendor if they're all done filling the crate, because many donations aren't determined until after the market closes. The volunteer thanks the vendors, and makes sure to collect as many crates as were distributed. Having a dolly to cart the crates from the vendors to the van helps.
3. **Wrapping Up:** Donations are tracked by volunteers for all markets in Google spreadsheet document created by the PCGP.

Suggestion: try to have one consistent volunteer from each site perform the farmers market gleaning, but provide the food bank with a document outlining the process, in case a different volunteer has to help. Also, designate one "emergency contact" (in this case, the PCGP gleaning coordinator) for the farmers market staff to call in the event that a crate is left behind or the food bank is unable to glean that day. Finally, plastic crates are better than cardboard in terms of sturdiness and telling them apart from the vendors' boxes!

Backyard Fruit Tree Gleaning

Drawing inspiration from Seattle gleaning groups such as Lettuce Link's Community Fruit Tree Harvest and City Fruit, the PCGP coordinator organized a fruit harvest in five neighborhoods in Tacoma, based on neighborhood council boundaries. While the second year of harvesting fruit trees has reaped more than eight times its first year harvest total, it has not been without challenges. The PCGP gleaning coordinator has learned a lot about organizing a fruit harvest, following the 4 general steps outlined in Solid Ground's fruit harvest handbook *Gather It!*: Planning, Laying the Groundwork, Harvesting, and Wrapping Up.

Planning

- Determine the scope of the fruit tree harvest. PCGP focused on fruit tree harvests in Tacoma, but did arrange harvests in Puyallup (a nearby city) and elsewhere when time permitted.
- With respect to goals, the PCGP decided to focus on community engagement more than harvesting sheer pounds of fruit.
- Types of fruit harvested included apples, pears, plums and cherries. Cherries and other highly perishable, hard-to-get fruits are not highly recommended. Many food banks are happy to get wormy or scabby "cooking apples," but ask food banks ahead of time and try to sort them from good apples. Apples that fall on the ground cannot be donated (due to the risk of salmonella contamination from animal droppings), but are great for volunteers to take home!

Laying the Groundwork

- ...> Community fruit tree harvests essentially connect trees with people, so a large part of organizing the harvest is recruiting volunteers and fruit tree owners.
- ...> When volunteers sign up in person or online they indicate their interests (farm vs. fruit), whether or not they'd like to be a neighborhood coordinator, and which neighborhoods they are interested in gleaning. That way they'll receive updates only regarding harvests they may be able to assist.
- ...> Prospective coordinators were casually interviewed by phone before harvest season and met with the PCGP coordinator and the Jesuit Volunteer to learn how the harvest works and receive tools (handbook, 1-2 picking bags and 1 fruit picker).
- ...> Other volunteers were encouraged to attend one of two harvest training sessions at public libraries in July, to learn about the project structure, harvesting techniques, and safety.
- ...> Fruit tree registration in person or online is helpful for planning, but to make a harvest happen, the fruit tree owners call in to the St. Leo's office when the fruit's ripe. From there, the St. Leo's office staff shared information about the fruit tree owners with the gleaning coordinator, who passed the information along to the neighborhood coordinator to set up a harvest.

Harvesting

- ...> Collect call-in information from your intake center. The PCGP chose St. Leo's as the call-in center because there is someone answering phones at the St. Leo's office during regular business hours, while the coordinator is away from her desk too often during harvest season to connect with donor calls.
- ...> Call the fruit tree owner back to determine a time to check the quality of the tree ahead of harvest, if time permits, and to schedule a harvest.
- ...> Email the neighborhood volunteers with the prospective harvest time.
- ...> Once enough volunteers have responded, the harvest is set and the coordinator or neighborhood coordinator drives the tools to the site, oversees the harvest, and donates to the nearest food bank, based on the list of Where to Donate. Helpful tools to bring include:
 - ◆ Orchard ladder – if you buy one, buy a 10 ft. ladder. A tall ladder usually works better even on short trees.
 - ◆ Fruit pickers
 - ◆ Picking bags or backpacks
 - ◆ Boxes – milk crates work well.
 - ◆ Box labels – It helps to make labels that say “Good,” “Cooking,” and “Ground” to binder-clip on your crates as you harvest to keep these types separate.
 - ◆ First aid kit
 - ◆ Water bottles
 - ◆ Eye protection

Wrapping Up:

- ...> Thank the donor by leaving thank you notes for the tree owners
- ...> Record harvest totals and volunteer hours in a shared Google doc. Google docs is a great tool for collaboratively tracking harvest data, but is new to a lot of folks – it is recommended to provide a step-by-step on how to use any Google-based spreadsheet you create. See our tutorial [here](#).
- ...> Throw an end-of-season party to thank all involved!

Plant Start Distribution

The PCGP gleaning coordinator worked with the Pierce County community garden coordinator to distribute plant starts in support of the Plant a Row for the Hungry (PAR) campaign.

Seed Donations

- ...> Towards the end of the growing season (October in Pacific NW), start visiting local stores and writing letters to seed companies asking for donations of last year's seed. It helps to include your Employer Identification Number (EIN) in your letter to prove your organization's non-profit status and to allow the donor to deduct donations from their taxes.
- ...> Repack the seeds into smaller packets with your program's info on it.

Seed Distribution

- Determine your target growers, and then find a natural partner to help you distribute seeds to reach those individuals. The PCGP targeted practiced gardeners, which are a diverse group of people.
- Because the EFN executive director has a connection with the leadership of the county library system, and because it covers the whole county geographically, the PCGP opted to distribute its repackaged seeds at the 17 branches of the county library system in the spring. To do this, the gleaning coordinator brought 17 beautified coffee cans full of seed packets and PCGP brochures for distribution.

Grow Starts (see photo here)

- For seeds that need to be started early in the spring and transplanted, such as broccoli, onions, and tomatoes, the PCGP coordinator sought partners with greenhouses to start those seeds so they could be distributed at springtime events.
- Partners included two high schools, three farms, and Tacoma's biosolids treatment plant. The PCGP gleaning coordinator and Jesuit Volunteer organized volunteers to seed the plants in mid-late February at the high schools and the biosolids plant, while the farms graciously planted extra trays of the plants they normally grow.
- Seeding entails filling seed starting trays with moist planting soil mix, putting 1+ seeds on each cell of the seed starting tray, lightly watering the seeds in, and leaving the tray in a greenhouse to germinate. Volunteers at each site were responsible for watering and caring for the plants until maturity in late April.

Distribute Starts

- To maximize publicity, find a big event to distribute the bulk of your plants at. Most PCGP starts went out at the Community Garden Summit organized by the community garden coordinator in late April. At the end of the half-day Summit, attended by the mayor and consisting of gardening workshops, gardeners were invited to take plants and encouraged to grow them for their nearest food bank.
- To promote this idea, the PCGP coordinator and Jesuit Volunteer handed out lists of Where to Donate to gardeners on their way out. While nearly 150 gardeners took plants home, there were several trays of veggie starts left at the end of the day.

Wrapping Up

- Distribute remaining plants. Leftover plants were kept at one of the high schools until they could be planted in community garden food bank plots on a volunteer day scheduled during national AmeriCorps week. The few remaining trays were distributed to customers at St. Leo's.
- Recordkeeping for such a decentralized project is difficult. Depending on the community, tracking can be done by the gardener or the food bank, and the records can be kept in the form of donation receipts or in a log. Second Harvest in Spokane has great success tracking every single garden donation with its receipts, and Lettuce Link in Seattle works with the organized "P-Patch" gardeners, who track the donations in a log at each garden. The PCGP has started tracking monthly garden donations in logs at two food bank organizations, who cover a wide geographic area of the county and distribute 33% of the food given out by Pierce County's 67 food banks.

Gleaning Resource Guide #2: Seattle Community Farm

At Lettuce Link

By Americorps*VISTA Mariah Pepper

History

The Seattle Community Farm launched in 2011. The farm is run by Lettuce Link, a program of Solid Ground, which has been running an urban farm in the South Park neighborhood of Seattle since 1998. In 2009, Lettuce Link received money through the USDA's Community Food Project (CFP) grant to start a new urban farm. After a lengthy search for space, a partnership was started between Lettuce Link and the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA). SHA manages low-income and mixed-income housing developments throughout Seattle. A piece of land in the Rainier Vista re-development that was unused for years is now the Seattle Community Farm. Rainier Vista is in the Rainier Valley neighborhood in Southeast Seattle. The Farm got started with money from

the CFP grant, a Parks and Green Spaces Levy from the City of Seattle, and many other donations. Numerous groups have donated funds, materials, and labor to help establish the farm's infrastructure. Rainier Vista is a mixed-income housing development, and includes families speaking 56 different languages, so the farm is particularly focused on community involvement and how to equitably offer programs and services.



Overview

The Seattle Community Farm (SCF) has many goals in the community: getting fresh produce to those who struggle to afford it, educating children and adults about growing and cooking their own food, and connecting people across cultural and linguistic barriers to garden together. The farm is maintained by volunteers and a few Lettuce Link staff members. Some of these volunteers are low-income residents who have signed up for a Work Trade, a program which allows them to volunteer in exchange for vegetables. This program is highly informal, and anyone

who has trouble affording produce can participate. The farm's remaining produce goes to the Rainier Valley Food Bank.

Besides recruiting volunteers, we engage people and groups in the community through various activities and events at the farm. We host field trips for schools and local youth groups throughout the growing season, and during the summer we run an educational gardening program in partnership with the Rainier Valley Boys and Girls Club. We also host groups from local organizations during work parties, such as the day treatment program for mentally ill adults from Asian Counseling and Referral Service.

We also get involved with other events and groups in the community, such as potlucks, cooking classes, and parties at the farm during the summer. Residents of the neighborhood enjoy walking through the farm and looking at all the beautiful plants. The neighborhood is incredibly diverse, our goal is to offer many kinds of activities so everyone can feel comfortable participating.

Outreach

One of the goals of the Seattle Community Farm is to engage the community in growing and sharing food. Therefore, we only do outreach in the immediate neighborhood around the farm, rather than engaging with large groups from anywhere in the city. The immediate neighborhood currently consists of about twelve blocks of residences, with roughly 180 families, and the surrounding area is significantly larger. Because that neighborhood is so diverse, we have tried to do outreach in many ways so as to reach as many people as possible.

Translation and Interpretation

In a neighborhood where there are immigrants and refugees who speak 56 different languages, it's important to reach people in their own languages. Following are a few of the lessons we've learned this year and recommended tips for using translation and interpretation services to do outreach:

- "Translation" refers to written materials, and "interpretation" refers to spoken interactions.
- Figure out which languages are most widely spoken, and offer services in those languages.
- Note that many people who speak regional dialects or less-widely spoken languages also speak a more common language.
- For example, many Ethiopian people speak Tigrinya in the home, but also understand Amharic, which is used for official business in Ethiopia.
- Translations of text or flyers are useful, although some immigrants may lack high levels of literacy in their native language.
- Translated materials are also good to give to interpreters so they have a reference in both languages.
- When making flyers in multiple languages, think critically about the size and placement of the translations.

- Putting the translations in smaller type makes sense logistically, but make sure the text is readable and eye-catching.
- Interpreters, especially those who live in the community, are great resources for reaching people in that cultural group. They are also good people to ask about what is polite in their culture.
- Interpreters already exist in both cultures in some ways, so they are often very good at explaining cultural norms that may be incomprehensible to you.
- Always allot more time for events when using interpreters. The same activity takes roughly 40% longer when going through interpretation.
- If people will be asking questions through interpreters, allot enough time to interpret both the questions and answers to other language groups (who didn't ask the question).

Community Infrastructure

Every community has certain groups, organizations, or faith communities that attract a lot of people and hold public influence. Connecting with these groups to build and maintain good relationships is critical. In our context, we make sure to establish relationships with groups that serve all the major cultural groups in the neighborhood (i.e. East African immigrants and refugees, SE Asian immigrants and refugees, low income renters, and middle class and wealthy homeowners).

Following are some good strategies and things to keep in mind when connecting with existing community groups.

- Someone probably has a list of all the groups of a particular type. For example, a non-profit or social service agency likely keeps a list of additional services offered in the community.
- Make sure not to assume that this list is comprehensive until you've done some investigating yourself. You never know when one group may have a grudge against another and won't give out their information.
- Visiting groups is a great way to network. You may not get any volunteers directly from these visits, but they help with visibility of the project, and relationship building.
- Visiting groups may mean participating in the activity they do, or giving a presentation on the project.
- Get to know well-respected community members. This is good "cultural capital" as they will know who else you should connect with.
- "Cultural capital" refers to the kind of status you hold in a community, and it's a good thing to think about when doing outreach. If you are well respected, and well connected, in the community, people will be more likely to participate in the programs you offer.
- Elders often have high status in groups organized around cultural affinity. They may be your initial contact to establish relationships within a cultural group.
- Be prepared for groups organized around a culture or religion different from your own to do things differently than you might expect. Engaging in their customs is a great way to show people you're trying to connect with them as people - a good way to start a relationship.
- This doesn't mean you have to adopt their culture, but figuring out which pieces are important to respect and uphold is useful.
- For example, most Somali immigrants are Muslims, and many of them place a high value women's modesty. As a non-Muslim woman, I am not expected to follow the same standards, but I try not to wear clothing (for example, tank tops) that is far outside their cultural norm.
- Make it a point to attend events in the community, even if opportunities to present the project or distribute flyers are limited. Talking to people in a more social context is often a better way to recruit volunteers and supporters.

Volunteer Appreciation

Everyone likes to be appreciated for the work they're doing. Thanking volunteers also allows you to make a pitch for their continued involvement with the project. We sent thank you cards to our volunteers at the end of the summer with a reminder that the growing season continues through the fall. Thank-you cards are a good way to acknowledge volunteers individually and to show your appreciation for their hard work. Find something personal to say to each of them.

We also hold a Harvest Celebration and other volunteer potlucks. It's nice to get people together just to socialize, not work. Being a farm, cooking and eating together are natural ways of doing that.

Donor Relations

Because we are a community farm and not a traditional gleaning project, we don't work with donors in the same close way as other gleaning projects. However, we do have several donors of money, skills, and materials with whom it's important for us to keep up good relations. Following are some ways to solicit donations and maintain good relationships with your donors.

- Donors such as garden supply stores or seed companies are obvious, but others require more creativity to figure out how they fit in. For example, a design-build firm that focuses on architecture projects helped us create tables for a community space where we can hold potlucks at the farm.
- Personal relationships really are the best way to get business done. Talking with potential donors about more than just your task can leave a good impression and make them more likely to donate.
- Make sure to place a dollar value on any in-kind donations you get (this is important for reporting purposes). This goes for labor as well as goods.
- Invite current, past, and future donors to come experience the project first-hand. We invite people to work on the farm as well as attend other events such as potlucks.
- Sometimes corporate groups want to hold a volunteer day doing hands-on work. While they're at your site, ask for monetary donations. Your ask will have more impact once they know first-hand what you do.

Visibility

Especially for new projects, getting your name and what you do out to the public is vital. Outreach and soliciting donations will be much easier if people have already heard of you. Here are some ways that we have found work well to inform the community about what we do:

- Create a flyer template with a logo or design that stays consistent. People will begin to recognize the lay-out of the flyer before they even read the words.
- When attending community events, take every opportunity to introduce yourself and your project.
- If people don't know who you are, prepare a 30-second explanation that you can use in any context.
- Find out what websites potential volunteers, donors and/or supporters use frequently, and find a way to post your information on them.
- In Seattle, each neighborhood has a blog where people can post events. We use this to make sure people know what's going on at the Farm.
- Do be careful not to rely too heavily on social media and other digital media, as not everyone has ready access to a computer and/or feels comfortable getting their information that way.
- Get your events and information about your project into the local newspaper. Either write an article or opinion piece for them, or invite a reporter to attend your event.
- There are newspapers and newsletters of various sizes, and they all may be useful.
- For example, the Seattle Community Farm wrote articles for the newsletter that goes out just to the neighborhood residents, and we also invited reporters from Seattle TV news stations to our Grand Opening.
- Highlight your partnerships, and ask your partners to do the same. Put their name and logo on your website, flyers, or other printed materials. If people know and respect an organization you're partnering with, they are more likely to pay attention to what you're doing as well.

Food Bank Gardening

Growing vegetables for a food bank is different than growing vegetables for anyone else, especially in regards to variety and quantity. Here is how we think about growing for the food bank:

- Figure out what kind of vegetables the food bank customers want.
- You can do a survey, a community meeting, or just ask the food bank staff what customers tend to select first.
- Be sensitive to the cultures of the people that frequent the food bank. As much as possible, grow things that the

majority of customers recognize and know how to cook.

- Quantity does matter to a food bank. Donating small amounts of several different vegetables is less useful than 20 pounds of one type.
- Variety is important, though, so try to grow vegetables food banks can't get through other sources of food.
- Time your harvests with the food bank's distribution schedule. Keep in mind that they'll need time to weigh, bag and set up the produce before distribution.
- Make sure you have a mode of transportation – don't leave it up to chance whether a volunteer with a car shows up that day.
- You should be responsible for recording the pounds you donate. The food bank is likely too busy to have that kind of capacity for record-keeping.
- We send the food bank a poundage report at the end of every month listing how much we donated. This saves them the work of weighing the produce, but they can still use the numbers for reporting.

Education

This season we hosted a garden class at the farm, with an instructor from another organization. That class was for adults, and we also run an education program for kids. That program has two components; the summer program, run in partnership with the local Boys and Girls Club, and field trips. During our first year, we hosted one class from the Boys and Girls Club for an hour and a half-long session every week throughout the 8-week summer program. Field trips to the farm typically last an hour or two (depending on age), where they participate in garden and nutrition-related activities. While the program's components differ in scale, they are based on the same theories and visions, so the following thoughts apply to both.

- Consider the group's cultural and language backgrounds.
- If you're cooking food, cook a dish that most people will recognize and be excited to eat.
- There are lots of great children's books that feature food from various cultures. Find one that the kids can relate to in your group.
- If there are multiple cultures represented, look for a children's book in which the characters learn about each other's food, such as *The Ugly Vegetables* or *The Sandwich Swap*.
- If there are non-English speaking kids in the group, be sure to accommodate their communication needs.
- If they're coming from a school or other program, they likely have teachers or leaders who can interpret for them.
- Many garden tasks, such as harvesting, can be done with gestures and only a few words. With a non-English speaking group, focus on physical activities that will work for everyone.
- Plan activities in which kids get to share about their family's cooking traditions. If you can, incorporate the vegetables they talk about into a subsequent lesson.
- Base the curriculum on the goals of the program.
- For field trips, ask the leader ahead of time if the group has specific topics or educational goals you might address.
- For a longer program, decide on a focus and incorporate something related to that focus in each lesson.
- For example, your goal might be to give children an understanding of what plants need to grow. Each lesson can focus on one thing, such as water or soil, which is necessary for plant life.
- Tailor the garden work to the age of the kids. Be sure to consider what kind of previous garden experience the group has had.
- Note that around middle school age, some kids are able to do delicate tasks such as thinning, while others don't have that focus and are more suited to larger tasks, such as raking or digging.
- You can ask the group's leaders to split the kids up according to what kind of task they will succeed at.
- Kids often don't quite understand where their limbs end and the rest of the world begins. Make sure to emphasize rules regarding where to walk and what they can touch before doing anything in the garden.
- Kids are a great way to reach their entire family. Inviting youth groups to the farm can be an effective outreach tool.

Partnerships

Because the Seattle Community Farm is so focused on community engagement, we look at partnerships with neighborhood organizations and groups as essential to our work. We have found three types of partnerships that are worth exploring:

Similar Goals and Programming

- If there are organizations doing something similar, why bother competing? Collaboration can allow you to support one another, exchange ideas, and possibly co-sponsor events or classes.
- This reduces the chances of volunteer recruitment becoming a competition. You may even find it useful to recruit volunteers together.
- Our example: The Seattle Community Farm works with a loose coalition of food and anti-hunger organizations in the area. Sometimes we co-sponsor events or gather to brainstorm ideas.
- One example is the garden classes for adults we sponsored during the summer of 2011. Another organization provided an instructor for the classes, while we did the outreach and provided the venue. We split the costs of translation and interpretation between our two organizations.
- If you're grant funded, make sure all the grant requirements are still being met and that other organizations are not taking over your responsibilities.

Physical Proximity

- Organizations that are in close physical proximity make natural partners because you probably already interact frequently.
- Your physical proximity may also mean you're serving the same customers or recruiting from the same group of volunteers, and a partnership can enhance everyone's experience with both organizations.
- Our example: The Seattle Community Farm has formed an unofficial partnership with Habitat for Humanity because they're building a house next to the farm. We might not otherwise have had access to them, but it has been incredibly helpful.
- Habitat's AmeriCorps team built a tool shed for us as part of their annual service project.
- Some projects on the farm, such as building our fence, could count for Habitat residents' sweat equity time.

Serving or Working with the Same People

- Organizations that provide services or opportunities for the same group of people, even if those services are very different from what you offer, can make good partners.
- If the organizations have a relationship it will be easier for people who are served by both of them.
- Our example: The Seattle Community Farm works with Neighborhood House, which provides case management, runs a Head Start pre-school in the neighborhood, and provides space for local cultural organizations and youth groups to promote each other's programs and do outreach together.

Gleaning Resource Guide #3: Plant A Row for the Hungry

At Second Harvest Tri-Cities

By Americorps*VISTA Nathan Finch

Plant a Row for the Hungry (PAR) was launched in 1995 as a public service program of the Garden Writers Association. Garden writers encouraged their readers/listeners to plant an extra row of produce each year and donate their surplus to local food banks, soup kitchens and service organizations to help feed America's hungry. In 2002, the Garden Writers Association Foundation was established as an independent nonprofit to administer and expand Plant a Row. PAR provides focus, direction and support to volunteer committees that promote herb, vegetable and community gardening at the local level as well as coordinating with the local food collection systems and tracking the volume of donations being donated to food pantries.

The Plant a Row program was introduced in the Tri-Cities in 2010 as part of the Harvest Against Hunger produce recovery effort. The program has been embraced by the community in many ways. Some of which have broadened the reach from its original conception. Now, not only are individuals planting extra vegetables in their backyard gardens, but schools, churches, neighborhoods and city parks are also getting involved. Using plants and seeds donated from within the community, these gardeners are able to grow extra vegetables to donate to the food bank nearest them, or to Second Harvest, making use of their distribution system. In the first year, this simple grassroots solution saw donations of fresh fruits and vegetables exceeding 25,000 pounds. With further program development and education, the PAR program could double the pounds donated and expand the growing/donation season becoming a year-round source for fresh produce.

Volunteer/Donor Relations



Unlike typical gleaning programs, PAR participants fill both gleaner and donor roles. As with gleaning from commercial operations, PAR has its own liability considerations, though much simplified. The same laws that protect commercial donors apply to individual donors. The Federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act protects all food donors and gleaners from criminal and civil liability.

With the liability issue covered, the focus turns to program development and donor recruitment. For this, marketing materials are needed for recruitment and a tracking system to measure the program's impact. Spreading the word is obviously important, but of equal importance may be tracking donations. These numbers will be useful for reporting or when applying for grant funding

to expand or maintain your local or regional program. Examples of marketing and tracking materials may be found in the appendices.

PAR participants will be community members actively gardening or those interested in getting into the hobby. In either case, the most effective way of reaching such individuals is to develop outreach materials, like brochures and posters and strategically place them where you know gardeners will congregate, like nurseries, garden centers and garden clubs. This will be your primary direct recruitment method.

It is important that the message you take to the public be as simple and clear as possible. The idea is simple, "Grow food for your neighbors in need", but the logistical framework must be communicated to ensure quality donations and continued participation.

- When, where and by whom will donations be received and recorded?
- How much fresh produce can be held and for how long?

The fewer restrictions you place on participation, the more successful your program will be. For those who request further guidance, such as, "What should I plant?" have materials prepared based on the local food bank's needs.

Visibility

Once you have a clear mission to use when recruiting gardeners here are a few ideas for getting the word out.

Garden centers: Establishing a relationship with local garden centers provides an excellent platform for promoting Plant a Row where gardeners are purchasing goods in preparation for and maintenance of their gardens. Some ways garden centers have promoted the program have been displaying posters and brochures near seeds and vegetable starts and checkouts, and in some instances even stapling PAR information to customer's receipts. Other local businesses have donated vegetable starts as a way of bringing in more business and increasing PAR visibility in the community.

Media: PAR was started by the Garden Writer's Association, making contact with this group is a logical place to start. Contact the Garden Writer in your area by looking for their column in your local newspaper or online. Taking your message to local radio and

television stations can also be a great way to reach a broad audience. Typically, radio, TV and print media will have a single email address for receiving community news stories. Always alert the media when something positive is taking place in your program's development. This can be meetings to discuss community involvement, a group starting a garden, a business donating plants or materials, kids getting involved, or any other concept your community may embrace. Media outlets love positive stories and will be happy to provide coverage if you alert them.

Community Clubs: Gardening clubs and groups such as Master Gardeners through your county extension office will be your best source for reaching potential PAR donors. Other community clubs such as Rotary and Kiwanis can be very helpful in donating resources and expanding your network. Again, it is simply a matter of being prepared with a clear mission and concise ways individuals can get involved. Everyone loves a good idea, but the more direction and tools you can provide, the more likely people will follow through on that idea.

Religious Groups: Another excellent pool of individuals sympathetic to your mission, who may be your best allies, in not only spreading the PAR idea, but also following through with a garden or produce recovery effort.

Education



An often overlooked piece of the hunger relief puzzle is educating individuals and families about the importance of making healthy dietary choices. The food bank, while not solely focused on nutrition education, should consider the opportunity to take compassion a step further. One way is to provide access to diverse foods of high nutritional value and the means to prepare them in an appetizing way. If anyone is overworked and underappreciated it is a food bank manager, and the prospect of adding an element beyond the business of food-in/food-out can be overwhelming. Fortunately, there are resources within the community and online that can be utilized by bank management with little effort on their part.

As with much of the advice in this guide, local pantries can improve their impact in the community by clearly defining a present need and connecting with the people that have the means, motive and opportunity to meet that need. This problem can be solved much the same as the problem of finding food which pantries are very familiar with. In addressing the nutrition education deficit that breaks down to:

Means: Who in your community is a nutrition or public health expert? Who has the information your customers need access to?

Motive: Is there someone in the community motivated to bring this knowledge to the customers? This motivation may come from their job requirements, in the case of county health officials, or the moral imperative of a local physician or other health practitioners.

Opportunity: Do they know the problem exists and that the bank is open to their assistance in nutrition education?

How to prepare fresh produce and the health benefits of doing so is an important part of our overall goal to end hunger in America. See the documents section for a list of online resources for finding further assistance in nutrition education programs for your customers

Building Strategic Partnerships

Incentives matter. With any community based program, you will only be as successful as the willingness of those around you to participate. This willingness is proportional to their belief that their involvement is important and effective. To succeed in retaining well-meaning volunteers or donors you must be able to demonstrate the necessity of their participation by connecting them with a problem that has a mutually beneficial solution.

In the development of a PAR program those solutions may look like this:

Community Garden: The local parks department has an incentive to decrease maintenance costs (mowing) in neighborhood parks and increase park usage. The PAR program incentive is to decrease hunger in the community by increasing access to garden produce. The mutually beneficial solution is to work with the Parks Department and interested gardeners to create a community garden in the park maintained by volunteers with a portion (1-100 percent) of the produce donated to local food pantries.

School Garden: The school district Nutrition Services Director has an incentive to increase the nutritional quality of meals provided which will largely be achieved through increased fresh fruit and vegetable consumption. This goal has been proven to be more easily achieved when students have a better connection to where food comes from and how it is grown. Again, a school garden can mesh with PAR incentives when the garden is donating a portion of their harvest to the local food bank. The positive externalities of a solution of this kind can be amazing.

Nutrition Education: Partnering with the Benton/Franklin Health Alliance in the Tri-Cities led to a partnership between local food pantries and nursing students in need of clinical hours. This partnership exposes future health professionals to the difficulty of meeting nutritional needs with limited food access while fulfilling requirements of the Community Health class. This arrangement requires little from the food bank's volunteers or management, other than coordinating when the students may interact with customers and providing insight as the students develop ways to provide effective nutrition education.

These programs in turn provide excellent publicity opportunities for PAR promotion. Whatever solutions you may find in your community, you cannot forget who your efforts are meant to be benefitting and not lose focus on what they truly need. This may require surveys or other methods of gathering this information. Maybe they would like to grow their own food and could use help obtaining materials or the knowledge to do it successfully. Perhaps the customer has access to sufficient fresh produce during the summer months but not through the winter. What if they can't get their kids to eat the vegetables? When you are able to address a clearly defined problem it becomes much easier to find solutions by building strategic partnerships which are mutually beneficial and sustainable.

Plant Start Distribution

When asking the community to grow extra produce to feed their neighbors the barriers to entry for the individual gardener will be the cost of plant starts and seed, space and inputs, time and motivation. The space and inputs barrier can be lowered through the creation of a community garden where the cost of land and inputs can be spread across all participants. Time and motivation can become huge barriers in the height of the summer, but can be overcome by connecting your volunteer/donor with the recipients of their hard work and other ways of acknowledging their hard work. As for plant starts and seeds find those in your community that have an abundance of these goods. That could look something like this:

High School Horticulture Class/FFA: This can be an excellent source for securing donations of plant starts. The classes are required to grow a certain number and variety of plants that are often sold in plant sales to raise money for their clubs. Clubs such as FFA and 4H are exposed to different aspects of farming and environmental studies, and are required to fulfill a number of community service hours to maintain membership. It becomes mutually beneficial to form a relationship with the teachers overseeing these projects when you spread the word about their plant sale in return for the leftover vegetable starts. Students can also be brought on as volunteers in PAR gardens to fulfill community service requirements.

Local garden center: What better way to stand out from the big box garden center competitor as a local nurseryman than to offer free or discounted plants and seeds to benefit PAR with qualified purchases? Media coverage at the height of the planting season that is mutually beneficial to the local garden center and a local hunger relief solution can be priceless.

Distribution can be a challenge when you receive hundreds or thousands of vegetable starts all at once and you have no place to put them or water to keep them alive if you did have the space. Avoid this by staying in touch with your potential donors and having a good idea of what quantities your PAR volunteers can absorb. When distributing vegetable starts try to make the transfer as direct as possible; otherwise, the plants will suffer as will you. This can be achieved by having individuals pick up their starts from a central location or delivering directly to a larger garden that will handle planting and distribution from that point. For donations and distribution of seeds, see the, Master of Free Seeds' Spokane PAR Chapter, for insight into this process.

Lessons Learned Overall

1. Have a clearly defined objective and plan in place for achieving it.
2. Be flexible; every problem you have an idea or solution for, no matter how brilliant, may not work out as conceived. Step

back, and get a better understanding of how to achieve your goal in a way that works for everyone involved.

3. Cast a broad net when searching for support; you will be surprised how opportunities arise in the most unexpected places. It never hurts to ask.
4. Follow through. Plant a Row is not a priority for most; a continuous presence is essential.
5. Some seeds take longer to sprout than others. Be patient, be proactive and don't get discouraged.

Gleaning Resource Guide #4

At Second Harvest

By Americorps*VISTA Keith Burgeson

History

Our mission is “Fighting hunger, feeding hope: Second Harvest brings community resources together to feed people in need through empowerment, education and partnerships.”

Second Harvest has led the hunger-relief network in Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho since 1971. Second Harvest distributes more than 1.5 million pounds of donated food each month to help people in need in its service region. Partnerships with more than 250 neighborhood food banks and meal centers make it possible for us to feed 48,000 people each week.

Volunteer Relations

Volunteers are more than likely critical to your project's functionality. Respecting volunteers and knowing each of their strengths and weaknesses saves a lot of time and money.

Know your needs. Make sure you know how many volunteers are needed, what will be expected of them, and for how long.

Recruit volunteers. There are several ways of doing this:

- ...► Recruit at an event
- ...► Send a news release to the media
- ...► Use social media sites
- ...► Ask volunteers/staff for referrals
- ...► Partner with other agencies
- ...► Keep volunteers motivated

Motivation fuels volunteers' eagerness to serve. Familiarizing yourself with what motivates your team can go a long way. Competition can be a very useful motivational tool. Tracking produce donations for yearly gleaning events fuels motivation for groups to surpass previous accomplishments. Every Columbus Day, Openeye (a company based in Liberty Lake, WA) sends 50-60 employees to a family-run apple orchard in Spokane Valley. Their goal, better last year's gleaning total. Second Harvest tracks the pounds of every glean, giving the volunteers an exact number as a goal.

Be sure to thank you volunteers often and in a sincere manner.

Volunteer Opportunities

Second Harvest offers a wide array of volunteer opportunities, most of which occur in our warehouse, but several gleaning events arise throughout the season as a way for volunteers to get involved off-site.

1. Green Bluff glean: Every year, Second Harvest collaborates with the local Rotary Club, Kiwanis, Lions Club, Thrivent, and Green Bluff Growers Association for a massive glean the first weekend in November. Hundreds of volunteers are sourced from the participating clubs to glean surplus fruit from several Green Bluff orchards.
2. Call-in harvests: Farms/orchards contact Second Harvest in regards to excess produce needing to be gleaned. Volunteers interested in gleaning are often given just a few days notice. This “on-call”-style can lead to an insufficient number of volunteers per event. Building a large volunteer pool is very advantageous for this reason.
3. Familiarizing volunteers with job requirements: Setting a priority for contacts is critical to ensure adequate volunteers are available for all Second Harvest programs. Determining specific product for volunteers to sort is based on current needs, the time of the month, and the age of the product. To effectively manage the volunteer program, there are regular monthly reports or activities that need to be done by the volunteer coordinator or assistant.

Occasionally the volunteers have been asked to fill out a survey about programs and/or services to get their ideas and input about operations. You can always learn from volunteers and make improvements based upon their suggestions. Some of the regular volunteers are retired professionals and they have talents in organization and management that can be applicable to work for the food bank. It is always good to remind volunteers about the impact they have on providing food to those less fortunate.

Donor Relations

Much like volunteers, donor relations are vital to an organization’s sustainability.

Second Harvest’s Food Sourcing/Development Team meets frequently to discuss and measure strategies in building relationships with its donors. A creative, soft approach (friendly; not overbearing) has proven advantageous in their line of success. Being sensitive to donors’ time and schedule are critical for the sustainability of the partnership.

Some helpful elements to successful donor relations are as follows:

- Donation Acceptance and Management: Encompasses procedures that address a variety of “issues” to consider before, during and after produce donations are made, ensures that donations are put to work as donors intend. This element is in reference to produce donations from a donor’s garden or farm.
- Safety is of the utmost importance. Neither side wants to deal with liability issues, nor do they want anyone getting hurt in general.
- Establish ground rules (general safety guidelines and specific requests from the homeowner) before you begin.
- Incorporate age restrictions where necessary.
- Use ladders properly.
- Leave the property cleaner than you found it. Upon completion of the harvest, have each volunteer scour the area for trash and debris. Bring trash bags in the event that yard waste bins aren’t available on site. Do not leave the trash bags on site for the homeowner to deal with. Take them with you.
- Acknowledgment: Cover protocol for and execution of accurate, timely, and meaningful expressions of gratitude.
- Send a “thank you” letter later that day or the following. Simple expressions of gratitude leave a good impression on the donor, increasing the likelihood for future gleans at their site. If possible, bring the letter to the harvest and have each volunteer sign it. The more personalized the better.

Attached is a structured breakdown of these terms from the Association of Donor Relations Professionals.

Visibility

Poor visibility can suffocate even the most amazing of projects. Just because you’re working sixty hours a week, knee deep in project logistics, doesn’t mean one can assume their hard work is being recognized by all. Marketing, while often overlooked, is essential to the health of the project.

- Create a PowerPoint presentation:
- Presenting your project to organizations using visual aids is engaging, professional, and enjoyable for both the presenter

and their audience.

- Utilize social media, blogs, social networking sites:
- Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and even Craigslist are great resources. This Bootstrapping Your Social Media Engagement slideshow gives some great ideas on how to increase Facebook and Twitter engagement for your nonprofit. These sites are free, easy to setup and maintain, and reach virtually every age and lifestyle demographic. A great site for free how-to webinars geared towards, but not limited to, nonprofits is: <http://www.ventureneer.com/webinars>.
- Master the art of writing a press release:
- Depending on one's writing skills, this may take a little practice, but will definitely prove worthwhile.
- Public relations is not the same as advertising:
- While advertising allows one to control their message, it can also be extremely expensive. PR is not only much lighter on the wallet – basically free – but it also gains credibility where advertising struggles immensely. This is where a great press release comes into play. Most readers are more likely to trust independent authorities such as reporters or broadcasters than an advertisement. Without a doubt, these authorities are directly influenced by good public relations and specifically, a well-written press release.
- Media coverage: Television, radio, or print can provide a lot of bang for very little (usually free) buck. Second Harvest does a phenomenal job incorporating the community into their programs. For example, the premise behind Plant a Row is a community-driven effort. Media outlets love the idea of a local business sending its employees on a glean for the hungry. If an orchard contacts you about gleaning their produce, make a strong effort to collaborate with a local business. There are many benefits to doing this:
 - ♦ Media outlets tend to prefer collaborations between two identifiable parties.
 - ♦ You can potentially obtain all the necessary volunteers from one source, saving a lot of valuable time and frustration on your end.
 - ♦ The local business gets media attention. This makes the event mutually beneficial, and in turn, more appealing to your volunteer source.

Plant A Row For The Hungry



Plant a Row for the Hungry, or PAR, is a people-helping-people initiative to assist in feeding hungry members of the community. The program encourages community members to dedicate a row (or more) of fruit, vegetables and/or herbs in their garden to help feed those in need. PAR was spearheaded by Jeff Lowenfels, a garden writer for the Anchorage Daily News and former Garden Writers Association president. The idea was implemented as a national program by the GWA soon after.

Second Harvest has implemented Plant a Row programs at each of their two locations; Spokane and Tri-Cities. Second Harvest also collaborates with the University of Idaho's Nutrition program in Coeur d'Alene, ID. Produce donations from all three sites are tracked under Second Harvest's annual Plant a Row figures.

PAR hinges upon community engagement. Much of the community engagement has been fueled by the distribution of free garden seeds and plant starts. Dozens of seed companies across the country were contacted (see attached seed donation request letter) in search of support for the program. The response was astronomical:

- Over 1,700 pounds of garden seeds were donated by numerous companies.
- Several nurseries in Spokane collectively donated over 3,000 plant starts to the PAR effort as well.

These donations not only encourage program participation, but also open an avenue of volunteerism for local middle and elementary schools. Students who are too young to volunteer their time in the warehouse, found an opportunity to organize seed packets for distribution. A large portion of the seed donations arrived in excessively large bags, making them impossible to distribute without breaking into easier to distribute quantities. To address this issue, seed packet templates (see attached) were created. The customized packets allow for additional marketing of the program on top of the increased community engagement opportunity. Students from several middle and elementary schools cut, filled, pasted, and distributed thousands of seed packets throughout Spokane.

Spokane County receives an overwhelming response from residential gardeners, small and large scale farmers, schools, places of worship, businesses, clubs and organizations, all committed to putting their green thumbs to good use. An exceptional example is East Valley High School. Their school district has turned an entire four acre lot nestled between the high school and middle school into a garden. The garden, which is on the verge of becoming a small farm operation, has proven to be worth its weight in gold for a wide array of classrooms. Biology, horticulture, agriculture, woodshop, construction, and alternative school students of all ages have benefited immensely from the district's utilization of a school garden as a learning tool. The garden donated over 2,000 pounds of produce to the Plant a Row campaign during its inception year in 2010.

Starting a Plant a Row campaign couldn't be easier. The Garden Writers Association will help you get started, offering brochure templates and step-by-step instructions on implementing your own Plant a Row project. Their four step process model is as followed:

- ♦ Step 1: Enlist a Network
- ♦ Step 2: Plan Your Campaign
- ♦ Step 3: Publicize Your Campaign
- ♦ Step 4: Celebrate the Harvest

Carol Ledbetter, Program Administrator, is a phenomenal resource for breaking ground on your own Plant a Row project. Email Carol at: par@gardenwriters.org.

Follow Second Harvest's Plant a Row program on Twitter

Workshops

Working in collaboration with WSU Extension, and several likeminded community members, Second Harvest has incorporated a series of gardening workshops through its Plant a Row program. The goal is to help community members become more efficient gardeners to produce more for the community. The workshops have an all-encompassing focus on gardening: before, during, and after the harvest season.

Workshop Topics

- ...> Seed Starting: getting a jumpstart on the growing season; focuses on planting from seed.
- ...> Building a Greenhouse on a Budget: homemade greenhouse alternatives that save you money.
- ...> Fruit Tree Maintenance: focuses on proper pruning and spraying techniques for fruit tree owners.
- ...> Composting: the ins and outs of composting 101.
- ...> Vermiculture: a highly efficient alternative to standard composting that uses worms.
- ...> Food Preservation: focuses on the how-to methods of water bath canning, pressure cooking, fermenting, dehydration, and freezing.

The Plant a Row workshops have proven to be a great resource by:

- ...> Enhancing the horticultural knowledge of those involved.
- ...> Fostering community engagement.
- ...> Getting community members excited to participate.
- ...> Spreading the word about the program.
- ...> Showing gratitude for all the hard work being put forth by those involved.

Attached are some material resources from the Plant a Row workshops listed above.

Fruit Tree Gleaning

The term “gleaning” is foreign to many people. Gleaning is the act of collecting leftover crops from farmers’ fields after they have been commercially harvested, or from fields that are not economically profitable to harvest. Basically, gleaning salvages crops that would otherwise be left in the fields to rot or be plowed under.

Home Fruit Harvest

Under the Plant a Row umbrella, Second Harvest has implemented Home Fruit Harvest (HFH) - a fruit tree registry program geared towards salvaging fruit from residential and orchard trees.

Homeowners ideally maintain and harvest their own fruit when possible. Second Harvest supplies the education (workshops), as well as banana boxes and transportation on harvest day.

When homeowners are unable to harvest their fruit, Second Harvest will utilize its volunteer database. Acquiring volunteers is a necessity for orchard gleans due to their size.

Helpful Hints

- ...➤ Dress in layers. Mornings are often cool and wet. Wear pants and long-sleeved shirts as your outermost (cool weather) layer. Shorts and short sleeve shirts should be worn underneath. As the day progresses, remove the top layer, exposing the warm-weather layer.
- ...➤ Pants and long sleeves are recommended for orchards. This helps minimize skin exposure to poison ivy that may be growing.
- ...➤ Hats and gloves are also recommended.
- ...➤ Reusable grocery bags are great for carrying through the field. They’re lightweight and can be placed around your neck while climbing ladders. You can also use a three to five gallon pail with a handle.
- ...➤ Make sure someone brings a first-aid kit.
- ...➤ Most fields will lack bathroom accommodations. Be sure to use facilities prior to arrival.
- ...➤ Make provisions for water, especially on hot days.

The Alsperger family of Spokane Valley has 133 apple trees registered through Home Fruit Harvest. For the past five years, Columbus Day has been a day of giving back for OpenEye employees and their families. Owner Alan Aldous, has made an annual commitment to the Alsperger children to assist with gleaning the trees, continuing their father’s (Gene Alsperger) legacy of donating to those in need. 2011’s apples were noticeably smaller than previous years, but the trees were laden with an unusually high volume of fruit. The glean was a tremendous success, far surpassing 2010’s record-high of 9,800 pounds, as the weigh-in recorded a staggering 15,218 pounds! That’s 287 pounds of apples per person – an incredible accomplishment.

Just like any other produce being gleaned and distributed by Second Harvest, HFH fruit is not required to be organic. Spraying is a necessity for certain varieties, such as cherries, in the Spokane area. Second Harvest distributes over eight million pounds of fresh produce annually. Restricting donations to only organic produce would drastically reduce the number of customers we serve.

Gleaning Resource Guide #5: “Yes, we CAN!” Cannery Project

At South King County Food Coalition

By Americorps*VISTA Basil Weiner

The South King County Food Coalition was founded in 1983 to assess the needs of south King County food banks, organize their collective efforts and assure the effective distribution of food to south county residents.

The coalition currently seeks to strengthen the efforts of its member agencies by enhancing the local food security network through increased engagement with faith based organizations, non-profits, social service providers, local businesses, service organizations and individual volunteers in the fight against hunger and poverty. For the 2010-2011 cycle the coalition acquired a Harvest Against Hunger AmeriCorps VISTA to increase its capacity for this kind of outreach, network building and volunteer

engagement. The VISTA's projects included the “Yes, we CAN!” canning initiative, the Sonju Park community fruit orchard and garden, GIS mapping with the University of Washington, digital storytelling, grant research and assistance, and other projects. These efforts helped the coalition to increase its visibility in the community while increasing the amount of healthful produce distributed by the eleven food bank coalition.

Volunteer Relations

Outreach and Recruitment:

The “Yes, we CAN!” cannery project is volunteer intensive. It takes 30-50 volunteers to keep the cannery humming over a 7 hour period of time. If it mobilizes the necessary volunteer force, the coalition has access to upwards of 50 days of canning per year. With an average daily production of 2500 pounds of produce and an ever dwindling supply of produce from other sources, the motivation to recruit cannery volunteers has been great.

The VISTA found success in both active and passive outreach and recruitment strategies:

Active Outreach

Characterized by face-to-face, phone and email contact, active outreach is effective when you know who in the community might be interested and how to get connected to them. This takes some strategizing but is well worth the effort.

Some questions to consider in building an active outreach strategy:

- What is most compelling about your volunteer opportunity?
- You probably already know the answer to this question but it can't hurt to ask around to your colleagues and friends. Why is this an important project from your point of view? Your project might have wider appeal than you think and the more ideas you can get about its benefit the better prepared you will be to speak about it from multiple angles.
- Does it address an un-met need in the community?
- Who else in the community might care about filling this need? You could also ask: Who else in the community might feel compelled by the different benefits of your project?

Answering these questions will help you start to identify your key community partners for volunteer recruitment.

- Once you have a few potential community partners identified you can start to contact them to set up meetings and presentations.
- The VISTA carried out his active outreach strategy mostly in the form of presentations to potentially interested community groups. These included service organizations (Kiwanis, Rotary Lions, etc.), church mission groups, college clubs, other non-profits, volunteer organizations and corporate volunteer teams.
- Suggestion: When presenting to any group always arrive with a sign-up sheet! Once or twice the VISTA presented to groups and didn't have a sign-up sheet for interested volunteers. Instead, he gave out his business card and didn't hear from anybody. Make sure you always get their contact information.

Passive Outreach

- The strategic placement of advertisements and postings both in the physical community and on the web can be another effective way to find interested volunteers. Volunteermatch.com and the United Way's volunteer recruitment tool brought in many extra groups that the VISTA did not identify in the planning of his active outreach strategy.
- Observation: The dividing line between “Active” and “Passive” outreach can sometimes be blurred. A relationship you've built through active outreach might overtime become more passive. Once people have experienced how much fun your project is firsthand they will become the active recruiters and your role will turn a bit more passive. But passive outreach can be more active at times as well. For example, A group might approach you after seeing your internet posting and request a presentation.
- With this in mind, consider “active” and “passive” outreach and recruitment as tools for understanding different methods of finding volunteers, not as rigid silos for recruitment activities.

Leveraging Volunteer Resources:

- When looking to recruit large numbers of volunteers you are going to need to take actions that are efficient and effective. You don't want to be the only one telling volunteers about your project. The South King County VISTA

leveraged community volunteer resources by identifying other volunteer coordinators in the community and building relationships with them.

→ There were two distinct types of relationships developed

- ◆ **Volunteer Programs for local cities and suburbs:**

Most cities and suburbs near Seattle have their own volunteer management staff. This person's job is to connect interested volunteers with volunteer opportunities that benefit the community. Oftentimes they will have a monthly newsletter and are constantly looking for more material. One short meeting with someone in this position expanded the VISTA's reach beyond what he could personally manage. Make sure to equip these people with any necessary recruitment materials like sign-up sheets, pictures, videos and the like.

- ◆ **Volunteer Programs for other Non-Profits:**

Make sure you know what the other non-profits and human services agencies in your area are doing and that they know about what you're doing. Often, volunteer groups will need a few referrals to find the right opportunity given their size, availability and interests.. The more people in the community who know about your work the more referrals you'll receive.

Donor Relations

The South King County Food Coalition's VISTA projects differed significantly from many of the other Harvest VISTA positions this year. Little focus was placed on agricultural gleaning and thus the picture of donor relations looks very different. That said, the coalition has several key donors with whom this year's VISTA collaborated closely.

- All of the produce sourced into the cannery project comes from Northwest Harvest (NWH). Relations with Northwest Harvest as a donor have been extremely important to the vitality of "Yes, we CAN!" as a reliable source of produce for the coalition's food banks. The VISTA cultivated working relationships with key staff in both the NWH volunteer office as well as in the warehouse.
- Perhaps the single most important tactic employed to keep this relationship healthy was the simple act of publicly recognizing and thanking NWH for its invaluable support. Within the nonprofit sector any chance at promotion and visibility is a very valuable opportunity for an organization. The VISTA paid special attention to thanking this donor whenever possible.
- The United Way of King County is also a central partner in the cannery project as the principle monetary support of the program. The same care is taken with them to make sure their name is out in the community and associated with the wonderful benefit that this project brings to the region.
- The Church of Latter Day Saints Bishop's Storehouse in Kent, WA is the other central donor to the "Yes, we CAN!" project. They donate not only hundreds of hours of cannery time to the coalition but they also pay for all the necessary staff, materials, utilities and temporary storage space for the project. Coalition staff regularly met with the Bishop's Storehouse coordinator to check in about the status of the project, refine processes and streamline communications. So much of successful donor relations is finding ways to express, not only how appreciative your organization is of the donation made, but also of how much of a positive impact their generosity has on the lives of those you serve. We all need to know that our participation is valued and important so that we'll keep participating!

Visibility

You can increase visibility for your organization, produce recovery or volunteer engagement project in a number of different ways.

- **Think in terms of personal stories**

Yes, you are collecting thousands of pounds of produce with hundreds of volunteer hours in order to benefit countless families in need. In order to garner real awareness and visibility, you're going to need to learn how to tell the story of your project and organization in more specific terms as well. Telling the story of a specific person gives your audience a chance to connect to the human conditions that make your work important. Start with yourself. Why are you doing this kind of work? Think about your own experiences with hunger or poverty. Did you or someone close to you struggle in these ways? This is a good place for your story to start. People will connect with the source of your motivation in ways that bring out their own. This is a great tactic when dealing with any type of "donor" (volunteer, agricultural, financial). The VISTA worked on developing digital stories this year. Check out what he put together here.

- **Digital Materials**

You can only be in one place at any given time promoting your program and increasing the visibility of your organization. Putting in the time to develop some digital materials to send out via email or written on DVD and

distributed can multiply your effectiveness. If you know how to make digital movies or stories or you want to learn you should do so. You can also broaden your vision of what a donor is by looking to folks in your community who already have this knowledge. For example, marketing teams or ad agencies might do some work pro bono or you could collaborate with a college film class. This year's VISTA built a relationship with a local aspiring film maker to develop a short promotional video about the cannery project. Check it out [here](#).

→ Press Coverage

This year's VISTA worked with the 11 coalition member food banks as well as partners like United Way of King County, Rotary First Harvest and Northwest Harvest to leverage previously existing press relationships with local and regional news outlets for the benefit of the cannery project. A word to the wise: Sometimes it makes sense to try and get coverage from the big networks, but for community based efforts the most beneficial are often local papers and blogs (see the attached press releases for examples of how to announce events).

→ Inviting Elected Officials

Elected officials both attract more press to your cause and have the power to support your organization when the time comes to make budgets. As with news outlets, it's much harder to schedule your state's Senator or Governor for an event than it is to get a county councilperson or local city councilperson or mayor. For "AmeriCorps Week" this year, the VISTA invited 60-70 officials of all types and received one state representative and the staff person from a county councilperson's office. Cast a wide net and be diligent about follow up. Elected officials are busy and they want to be assured that their support of your project will be seen by local voters on news outlets. It's a good idea to include their offices on any press release emails so they know who to expect from the press. They will also tend to invite the press to events they attend in order to assure greater visibility.

Food Bank/Community Farms

In a heavily urbanized area such as south King County, the potential for on farm gleans is somewhat diminished. However, there is a growing interest from some of the coalition's food banks to develop community gardens and small farms that produce a portion of their food for consumption by food bank customers.

→ Sonju Garden and Community Fruit Orchard

- ♦ This property was a commercial fruit orchard but was neglected and donated to the city of Des Moines. It sat unused for many years until the parks department, the Des Moines Area Food Bank and a neighborhood volunteer teamed up to make a plan for its transformation into a community garden, park and source of fresh fruit.
- ♦ The VISTA worked closely with the dedicated volunteer and food bank staff to take the lead on volunteer outreach and recruitment for weekly garden work parties.

Through his involvement with Sonju Park, the VISTA realized something important: As a representative of the food bank he could reach out to multiple community gardens to both provide support and encourage donation to the nearest food bank. Gardeners were eager but had little information about how to donate. By simply connecting the gardeners to food bank websites the VISTA could empower them to give.

→ Solicitation and Distribution of Seed Donations

- ♦ The South King VISTA utilized templates from other Harvest VISTA and successfully adapted a strategy for soliciting donations from seed companies. By providing seeds in the beginning of the growing season to "P-Patch" and other community gardeners, relationships were built in order to increase produce donations to food banks come harvest time.
- ♦ Note: As seed companies sell their products throughout the growing season they start to clean out their inventories during October and November. These are the ideal months to start a mailing campaign. Seeds were successfully solicited in October, November, December, January and February.

→ Food Bank Farms

- ♦ At present, two food banks within the coalition are strategizing and planning for their own food producing properties to develop greater capacity for vegetable distribution to customers. This model provides its own unique advantages and challenges. Both of these agencies have engaged in long processes with the aim of buying land. If your agency is interested in this model, it is extremely important to stay focused about why you have chosen this model throughout the entire process of development. With your own farm or large garden that is dedicated to food bank production you can dramatically increase produce access among customers. However, it is a very intensive process and can take a lot of time and energy away from the daily operations of

your agency.

- ♦ The VISTA worked with one of these agencies to research new funders that might support a capital campaign to buy agricultural land for a food bank. Research conducted at a local county library was highly effective. Utilizing the library's non-profit resource databases, philanthropic foundations regionally and nationally were pinpointed and a list of 30 potential new funders was developed. Here's the link to the King County Library's non-profit resource center. Perhaps there is something like this in your area!

Building Strategic Partnerships

Many partnerships have been formed through the work of this year's VISTA. However, the most strategic of these partnerships are those around volunteer resources. With so much potential to use the cannery depending on the availability of volunteer groups, the VISTA acting alone could only hope to fill a small percentage of the potential opportunity. His goal was to develop a network of volunteer program staff to promote the cannery project as well.

- ...► For example, Seattle's Union Gospel Mission (UGM) is a huge agency that has great visibility among people, especially in the faith community, who wish to volunteer. They have such high visibility that they receive too many requests from volunteers. Rather than turn folks away, it is in their interest to find another opportunity for these extra volunteers. If the volunteer coordinator at UGM knew about other programs it is easy make referrals. The system itself is rather informal but could be made more formal and systematized if desired.
- ...► Building these relationships can be as simple as meeting for coffee or a one-on-one tour of a facility. Your partnerships will be strong if you prioritize face-to-face relationship building and phone conversations over email. Plus, it's just more fun to meet people who are passionate about human services, just like you!

Telling Your Story

The best way to attract a person's interest is through a story. We've been telling stories for thousands of years and we're no different now. We can empathize with the feelings of others through stories and we can begin to relate on a personal level. Your success in attracting donors, volunteers, funders, press and whoever else you might want to participate in your produce recovery project will depend on your ability to effectively communicate your story. Here are some useful tips for getting started:

...► Tell your story first

- ♦ Whether you are starting a new produce recovery project or strengthening a program already in place you'll want to tell people why. The most important question to ask yourself is this: "Why do I do what I do?" A possible variation on this question is: "Why do I care about this work enough to dedicate so much time to it as opposed to something else?" You may be tempted to begin by talking about how important it is for low-income folks to have access to produce for health reasons. You may want to talk about the cost to society incurred by unhealthy eating habits. You may want to talk about food desserts or childhood nutrition and these are all important things to talk about. However, what is really going to get people listening is if you tell a story about your personal connection to the work.

- ♦ **This process can be hard but the good news is that an effective story can be as short as a few sentences!**

Example: "When I was growing up my family ate lots of fast food and microwaveable meals. My dad was diagnosed with diabetes and his doctor told him he had to eat more veggies. Our whole family's diet changed and his health got better! Since then I've been passionate about ensuring that everyone has the choice to eat better."

- ♦ By sharing your motivation for this important work you invite others to find and stay connected to their source of motivation, too!

...► Listen to the stories of others

- ♦ As you form and deepen relationships in the community you'll start to hear the stories of others. These can be great to remember and use in conversation. This way you'll not only be able to tell your story but you can relay the stories of why others are involved.
- ♦ "Sarah up in Fall City grows vegetables and said she likes to donate to the food bank because she would go to the food bank with her mom when she was a kid and she wants to give back."

...► Using Statistics Wisely

- ♦ Statistics can provide great context to a personal story but should never be the only tool used in attracting

interest in your project. A good rule of thumb is to always try and balance personal stories and statistics.

- ♦ “At the food bank 30% of those who receive food are children. That’s why we connected our apple gleans to the local backpack program. Kids who can eat some fruit over the weekend will come to school on Monday more prepared to learn.”

→ Images and Video

- ♦ A picture can tell an incredible story. Consider the above example. The story may be just as powerful if we say:
- ♦ “At the food bank 30% of those who receive food are children” and then accompany this statistic with a photo of a child in a food bank line. The audience is invited to participate by filling in the rest of the story with their imaginations.

→ Making Movie Files

- ♦ Most likely you are only one person or a member of a small team of people developing a produce recovery program. There’s a limited amount of places you can be so why not create some video files that can help you conduct outreach when you’re busy?
- ♦ Consider taking some time in the slower months to brush up on some simple movie making software. A good, affordable option for your PC is “Sony Vegas Movie Studio.” Also, most Apple computers come with “iMovie.” With these programs you can combine photos, video, narration and music to put together some great little stories for distribution online throughout your network. It’s really fun and you’ll make it easier for people to help you spread the word by giving them a link to pass on!

Gleaning Resource Guide #6: Yakima Valley Produce Harvest

At Northwest Harvest Yakima

BY AMERICORPS*VISTA JAMI WILLARD

Brief History

The Yakima Valley Produce Harvest gleaning program hosted at Northwest Harvest started in 2009. 2010-11 is the second year an AmeriCorps*VISTA member has worked with Northwest Harvest in Yakima. The Yakima Harvest VISTA position has been the driving force for the development of a produce recovery project and primarily focused on capacity building of resources, such as gleaning at orchards, organizing transportation and volunteer pickers. Since the beginning of the gleaning program, over 300,000 pounds of nutritious fruits and vegetables were recovered. The produce has distributed to 45 food banks partnered with the Northwest Harvest warehouse located in Yakima.

Overview of current activities of site

The focus of the Yakima gleaning program is orchard and row crop gleaning, as well backyard garden gleaning, community garden gleaning, and Plant a Row for the Hungry (PAR). Orchard and row crop gleaning focuses on larger gleaning events in commercial or hobby orchards, which require more resources such as boxes and ladders. Backyard garden gleaning is collecting excess produce from personal gardens, and community gardens in the region are typically larger with a wider variety of produce available for donation. Plant a Row for the Hungry is similar to backyard garden gleaning, except the model used in Yakima focuses on gardeners picking and delivering their produce to drop sites, instead of gleaning volunteers collecting it.

Volunteer Relations



Volunteer recruitment and outreach is a crucial part of gleaning in Yakima. We are surrounded by orchards and some of the highest vegetable production per capita in the nation, but if we do not have volunteers to pick, there is no viable gleaning program. A variety of mediums and messages were used to reach out to potential volunteers. We focused primarily on community education through, campaigns, presentations and flyers.

Be an Advocate: Networking is essential to being an advocate to increase volunteer awareness for your gleaning program in your community. When at community events, or while participating in community organization, talk to folks about your program and the great things you do for your community. This benefits your organization in several ways. First, and foremost, it allows for community members to see the face behind the program and builds trust. This is crucial in smaller or rural communities where relationships and who you know is vital to program or organization success. It is also a great way to share your passion for the goals of the program. This is a great tool to build enthusiasm for the program and allows for folks to see how their skills can help the program succeed. Additionally, it might even expand the program to new ventures to fill a need in your community.

Presentations: To increase your volunteer base, consider speaking with established service, church, and youth organizations. Most of these organizations have community service in mind and are looking to get involved in other service activities. Flexibility is crucial while presenting. If certain facts or statements get particular audience reaction elaborate further on the topic. Tailoring your message to your audience is another great technique to give an impactful presentation. Take a second to think of how a piece of your presentation will impact different audiences. For example, explaining gleaning and its history could be approached differently when talking with a church verses a Kiwanis Club. For example, during a presentation to a church, a verse from the bible that specifically mentions gleaning could be beneficial. When at a Kiwanis club meeting, talk about how gleaning is an opportunity for young people to gain a different type of volunteer experience. You could further elaborate that the produce picked will ensure hungry children in our community have fresh fruits and vegetables to eat. Use anecdotes as much as possible, and do not be afraid to get enthusiastic or passionate when you feel it. This adds a lot in regards to genuine interest and knowledge of the topic. The final and likely most important piece of presenting is at the end. Be sure to have time to stay and talk with your audience, have information on your organization, the program, and a signup sheet. Also be sure to follow up within the next week with the organizer who invited you to the event and everyone who signed up to volunteer.

Flyers: Using creative flyers is a great way to inform your community about your program. When creating a flyer, first ask yourself a few questions about your program and the outreach. What is the purpose of the flyer? What job do you want this potential volunteer to do? Why is your mission and purpose important to the potential volunteer? How can the information on the flyer answer questions the potential volunteers might have? If having low barriers to volunteering is important, how can the flyer do that? A low barrier approach focuses on very few things needed in order to volunteer, such as filling out superfluous forms, scheduling an appointment, and going through a back-ground check. These questions are a way to help you target your message.

As an example, view this volunteer flyer. The flyer has pull off tabs to ensure it's easy for potential volunteers to have your organizations contact information. Notice the targeted message to community members who are interested in exercising. The target market are people who are interested in fitness. Also pay close attention to the addition of "no minimum time commitment" as a selling point to handle the concern of, "I don't have a lot of time". Keep these things in mind when thinking about your program. Try to come up with new ways of "selling" your program to different types of community members. Once your local community is "sold" on your idea it can truly flourish.

Donor Relations

Donors are critical for gleaning. Handling grower concerns, keeping the producer happy, and managing the gleaning event well are very important to hosting a successful an event and any future gleans.

Important Questions: Handle questions concerns and liability upfront and as honest as possible. Be able to explain the Bill Emerson Act and Release of Liability and Waiver of Damages Form. Liability is a legitimate concern, and should be handled carefully. Preface the conversation by saying you understand and respect the grower's concerns, and have a focused and accurate explanation of the act and form as tool. In an area saturated with traditional producers, explaining the Bill Emerson Act and appropriate liability form plainly is important. For example you could explain, "if someone gets hurt on your property the liability waiver will cover you against civil liabilities." A way of explaining the Bill Emerson Act is, "as long as the produce is donated in good faith, you are covered from any civil liabilities in regards to food safety".

When on the phone with a producer get straight to the point. Just ask them what they need from you, and how you can make things easiest for them. They are very busy` and don't have time to play word games with you. Another tip when on the phone is to smile. People can hear that through the phone, and might help you and the producer to have a relaxed and productive conversation.

When working with producers: Be as flexible as possible. Every producer is different, and has their own unique way of doing things. They are taking time out of their day to help you, so coordinating gleaning events around their schedule is extremely helpful. Doing a walk through with a producer to see the facility is a great option if time permits. Knowing, and discussing what produce is available is a great way to handle what materials to bring. Having all your gleaning equipment in one place and ready to go at any time is a helpful way of going from the office to the producer to gleaning in a short amount of time.

Producers and Media: Inviting media to a gleaning event is a great way to spread the word about your program. Be sure to mention the opportunity of news coverage to the producer either in a conversation before the gleaning event, before disclosing the address of the gleaning event, or before agreeing to the reporters request to record the event. Make sure that the producer is comfortable with someone from the media on their property. Also ask the producer if they would like to remain anonymous and ensure there are no conditions specifics about their location. These are legitimate concerns, and easy to manage as well. When the reporter arrives at the site take a moment to mention details that need to be excluded as prefaced by the producers. Reporters typically respect these requests as long as they know about them ahead of time.

Appreciation: Be sure to get a mailing address or email at some point before the gleaning event ends. Some producers ask for a receipt, and mailing or emailing it is a great way to take the pressure off while in the field. It is an opportunity for the organization to get the right weight, and the receipt together without being rushed. Mailing the receipt with a hand written thank you letter is a nice way to say thank you one more time - even though you have probably thanked them already.

Visibility

Visibility is important to ensure community members know about the program and are interested in participating.

Social media: Using social media is a great way to spread the word about your program. A really simple way to do this is to create a Facebook page. It is a very easy way to inform members of your community about what great things your program has accomplished. You can do great things such as post an upcoming event, add pictures from an event, include videos, plus volunteers can comment about their experience. A very simple way to increase the awareness of the community page is to create cards with the page name on them. See Volunteer Card. You could include information about the program and volunteering on one side, and the Facebook name on the other. After talking to community members about your program, a leave behind is a great way for volunteers or donors to keep up to date with what great things you're doing.

Use video as a medium for sharing your story: Video is a great way to share your story in a different way. If you just had a great event, producing a video is a nice way of sharing the information in a more engaging manner. It can be as simple as recording volunteers or supervisors that were involved in the event. Write a basic script to ensure all details and important facts are included in the clips. The clips don't need to be fancy and editing several clips together can produce a great and short video. Clips of the supervisors speaking about the total pounds picked and impact in community can make a simple yet extremely effective aid.

Traditional Media: Using the media, such as newspapers, TV and radio to share your message is a great way to touch lots of community members with the information of your program. Share and publicize your events with the media. As a best practice, send out a press release several days before the event, or even the first day of a several day event. Writing a successful press release is not scary. As long as the basic who, what, where, when, why and how are included. This press release should be sent to news stations and the local paper. If you have connections, such as knowing the producer or specific staff writers, it's helpful to send it to those contacts specifically.

Not every produce recovery program will have connections with the news media, and in that case email the release to the generic breaking news email. The station or paper will get in touch with you most likely a day or two later, and on the day they are interested in interviewing or speaking with you about the event. If you don't have an event planned, and you're still looking to get into the media writing a letter to the editor is a good way to accomplish this. Check the newspaper for articles that are generally related to the work of your program. This allows for you to connect relevant news to the work of your program. Ensuring that your letter is relevant to current news is important, because if the letter is not connected with local news it might not be published.

Seed Start Distribution



There are several ways to distribute plants into communities. The plan for the plants acquired in Yakima was to focus on distributing to food bank customers and other people who are hungry in our community. Our thought process was to directly fight hunger. The plants we distributed were gleaned from plant sales. The left over vegetable and fruit plants were saved from the trash and distributed.

The first step is to contact the people organizing the plant sale and offer your program as an option for any fruit or vegetable plants that might be left over after the sale. Master Gardener plant sales are great because they grow high quality plants and have a great variety. Don't be afraid to cold-call or

visit an advertised plant sale and ask about the plants left over after the sale. They might just get thrown out, and there is no harm in asking. If the plant sale organizers agree to participate and there are plants available to distribute, contact food banks, emergency services providers, community gardens, and shelters to inform them about the opportunity. Call as many organizations and people as you deem necessary, depending on how many plants exist and how much time you have to move them.

Capitalizing on available transportation is extremely helpful, otherwise minivans and pickup trucks can move quite a few flats of plants in one trip. Once the initial contact has been made to the organizations about the plants, it will be fairly easy to move all the plants you have available. Direct agency drivers willing to distribute plants to the greenhouse and distribute the plants. With the variety available at our plant start distributions, it was important to ensure that agency drivers got a variety of plants, but still took quite a few of the specific varieties we had in abundance such as tomatoes and peppers. Be sure to include care and planting directions with the seedlings to ensure that every plant made it to the point of production.

Pick-A-Thon

A Pick-A-Thon is an event which allows for two organizations to benefit mutually. A produce recovery organization can benefit from a regular gleaning event, for a day or multiple days, while the other organization has an event in which they can raise money. For example, Northwest Harvest Yakima and the La Salle High School have hosted a Pick-A-Thon every year for the past 5 years. La Salle raises money for their scholarship fund, and harvest or pick produce to alleviate hunger in their community.

Preparation

When planning such an event, meet with the co-organizers, a few weeks or months, before the event to touch base with coordinators. During this meeting, discuss details such as bathrooms, information for the students and chaperones (if partnering with a school), where the orchards are located and lunch. For an all day gleaning event, having a portable toilet is a must. Most producers do not want kids trudging in and out of their home using their personal bathroom for an entire morning. Ask a local service club if they would be willing to sponsor the toilet. If gleaning in the same orchard for several days, the toilet can remain, saving time and money. Be sure students receive a gleaning guideline before the glean, and that parents or chaperones get a similar copy that also covers supervisor tips. During the meeting you may have orchards lined up, or you might not. Depending on your partner organization, they might know producers, and it's good to ask. Be sure to find a final date when you absolutely need to know where the students are going, so that permission slips can be signed. Something to keep in mind for an all day glean is who is providing lunch. Students can pack their own, or for this type of event a local cafe or nearby fast food restaurant might be willing to sponsor lunch.

Alternatives

If you can't find an orchard be sure to have an alternative productive activity for a class or group. For example, we did not have an orchard lined up for every day of the event. We had a class go to the food bank warehouse and repack produce. Such an activity can be very and is still an opportunity for students to get physically active and have a rewarding experience. Think creatively about your own organization or network and brainstorm similar projects .

Farms or Orchards

Hosting an event for another good cause is a great selling point for a producer to host a gleaning event. Hosting a Pick-A-Thon glean at an orchard is not very different from any other glean except to make sure that you manage your volunteer force. In

regards to a school with several grades, depending on how large the orchard or field is, make a clear mark of where to stop in order to have product harvest the following day.

Logistics

Be certain to ask the producer where to park vans or buses. Do not be afraid to flag the bus down and direct them to exactly where they should be parked. Also make sure that you train students every day, because it will most likely be a new batch of students or even a different type of produce. Most students have never gleaned or worked in an orchard so be sure to explain to them about picking bags, ladders, pick etiquette and where the fruit goes.

Media

Be sure to send a press release to the local news stations and newspaper. It's a great story for stations willing to broadcast a positive and community orientated story. A reporter will come out if they have time and are engaged. Try not to be nervous during the interview. If gleanng is your passion, the sound bite will just flow out during the interview. If talking unscriped is not your style, write notes and facts to ensure that all the points you find important are discussed. When talking to a news reporter look at the one who is asking the questions and answer their questions honestly and with pride in your event and organization. If you can't answer the questions at that exact moment don't worry, just take a moment to gather your thoughts and start when you're ready again. Reporters are generally very flexible, unless it's a live interview.

U-Pick Gleaning

U-pick orchards or fields are an opportunity for anyone to pick their own fruit or vegetables. They are fairly popular with tree fruit and berry growers and occasionally with vegetable growers, like tomatoes. Approaching u-pick growers is a great way to diversify the type of growers you are marketing your gleanng program. In most cases, when compared to medium or large scale growers, accessing u-pick orchards and farms tends to be a lot easier. Such growers have the general public come onto their property on a daily basis, and are familiar with pickers with little experience. Once they have agreed to host a gleanng event you should continue with a similar protocol as you would with any other grower.

Finding Producers

The best part about u-pick growers is that they're usually more open to community members on their property and the idea of gleanng. When calling to pitch your project ask how their market is doing. This will let you know how many u-pickers are coming to their property. If the number is dwindling this is an opportunity for gleanng, as long as there is still produce on the trees or in the field. Typical, u-pick orchards are not always picked clean by the general public, so it is a great opportunity for traditional gleanng. If you present producers, for example cherry growers, the choice between harvesting their remaining fruit for the hungry, or letting the birds have it, they will likely choose gleanng.

Equipment and materials

Most u-pick producers have their own liability waiver, buckets, picking bags, boxes, and ladders. You will need to check with the producer to ensure they have all of these necessary materials, and ensure you can fill in the gaps of any items they may not have or let you use. For example, u-pick producers may have ladders, but are simultaneously harvesting and selling other fruit on their property. Thus, their ladders would be used by professional pickers in another orchard and not be available for volunteer gleaners. When touring their facility before the glean, or on the phone, be sure to ask what specific items are needed for local gleans to ensure nothing is overlooked.

Volunteer Specifics

If in a gleanng in an orchard, most of the fruit will likely be in clusters only accessible by ladder, but some should still be accessible from the ground. Most groups or individuals participating in gleanng will come out for a few gleans and training in the field is much easier, especially when a low barrier to gleanng event participation is important. Below are some tips about in field training on specific topics.

- **Picking bags:** Volunteers will need to be advised on how to put on a picking bag, because most have never used one before. Also be sure to inform them of how the bottom of the bag is tied, specific to the style of bag. Another important thing to share is how to release the fruit from the metal holding mechanism. Be sure to inform volunteers if they're picking very soft fruit such as peaches, plums, or very ripe pears to release the fruit into the box or bin very gently to prevent bruising and damage to the fruit.
- **Ladders:** This is a very important topic to discuss with volunteers because ladders are one key piece of equipment, if not used correctly could result in injury. Another thing to keep in mind, is most volunteers have not used an orchard ladder before, so good field training on use is extremely helpful. Teach volunteers how to set a ladder correctly. Teach them specific ladder use safety such as ensuring that while on the ladder the users "belt buckle" remains within the outer

rungs of the ladder at all times. This will ensure that when volunteers are at the top of the ladder they will stay on the ladder, and stay balanced. Sharing tips and tricks to setting up a ladder to reach more fruit is also extremely beneficial.

- ♦ A tool that is helpful to learn more about ladder safety is a video called “Tripod Ladder Safety” by Washington State Dept. of Labor and Industries in 2008. You can view a copy of the video from WA Labor and Industries through their resource library. Registration is free, and several video resources can be sent to you. They only cost would be in returning the video. It is also available for free on YouTube, Tripod Ladder Safety. The video is targeted towards professional pickers in the commercial fruit business, but the information about using a ladder is extremely helpful for a gleaner coordinator to gain the knowledge to teach ladder etiquette to volunteers.
- **Picking:** Sharing picking knowledge is important because volunteers who might not know any better could potentially destroy next year's crop by breaking off the spurs. There is lots of information on the internet about how to pick different types of produce, and reading some of that can be beneficial. Harvesting and Storing Apples and Pears The best thing to do is ask the producer. They know how it should be picked, and usually know extremely efficient tricks to help pick more fruit faster, such as cupping your hands around a whole bunch of blueberries and pulling them off in your hands all together as opposed to picking one berry at a time. Quality control is also important, even more so when picking into boxes, and standards should be shared with volunteers to ensure what you consider good product goes into boxes or bins. Keep in mind if you're picking into bins the produce will most likely be resorted and repacked, but fruit in boxes will go directly to food banks and customers.
- **Other Details:** If using boxes, especially if they are a unique style, be sure to let the entire group know how to put them together and close them. Be sure to let volunteers know where full boxes go, and ensure you are on the same page with chaperones if they are present. Sometimes chaperones act like they know more than you do, so be sure to take a moment after the volunteers start picking to emphasize details so everyone is clear about directions.
- **Weather:** If it's calling for rain or wind keep several things in mind. If it rains the night before the glean or the day of, trees will be wet. Water will come down on pickers when in the trees. This does several things. First the volunteers will be wet, and eventually cold. Depending on how the rest of the day goes, you might want to end early to be sure your volunteers don't get sick. Second, water on the ground and trees will eventually make the ladders very slippery. Inform the volunteers! Ladders can be hazardous, and if they are wet it can quickly become dangerous if they are not careful. Finally, some fruit act different after a rain. Cherries, depending on how sudden the introduction of water from a heavy rain might tear, which is called rain cracking. Golden Delicious apples will bruise even easier than normal would when picked right after a good rain and pears will ripen faster. These are just a few examples of fruit idiosyncrasies, and it's good to talk with producers about weather if rain is in the forecast. Growers or the master gardeners group in your community are a good source for local information.

Logistics

Logistics are extremely different when picking into boxes versus bins. Packing gleaned produce directly into boxes is generally easier, depending on how much there is to harvest. If picking into bins, be aware they should be dropped off at least a day in advance. If your organization has bins it makes life easier, if not try to track down slightly used ones for donation. The producer you're picking from might have some extras you can borrow. If not, and you know a larger producer in the area, call them and ask to borrow some. The key to borrowing bins is to ensure you get the correct bins back to the right producer. Another extremely important detail about bins is how to move them the field. Ask the producer if they have a tractor or forklift, because it's absolutely critical to have one. If the producer does not have a way to move bins and you don't either then you must use boxes no matter how much you are picking. Another important suggestion is that pallet jacks don't work on dirt, so loading bins will be very difficult without a tractor or forklift. It's also important to find out how many bins your truck can handle. Depending on how many full bins you have, it might take several trips to get all the fruit out of the field.

Gleaning Resource Guide #7: P.L.A.N.T. (People Learning Agriculture and Nutrition Together)

At The Okanogan County Community Action Council

BY AMERICORPS*VISTA SARA GERLITZ

Site Overview



20 percent and continual declines in rural industries such as mining, timber and agriculture, the OCCAC food programs help this community in ways other agencies can't.

In 2009 the demonstration garden paved the way for the partnership between Rotary First Harvest's Harvest Against Hunger project that places an AmeriCorps*VISTA. After the first-year VISTA's cycle completed in August 2010, OCCAC continued this collaboration with and the second-year VISTA arrived in November 2010 to administer the continuing food program P.L.A.N.T. (People Learning Agriculture and Nutrition Together). The P.L.A.N.T. grant, which started in July 2010, aims to increase the daily fruit and vegetable intakes of low-income children in Okanogan County by gleaning 20,000 pounds of produce and increasing the amount of agricultural donors to the gleaning program. The three tiers of this grant and the gleaning program are: home gardens for low-income families on WIC (Women, Infants & Children); the on-site demonstration garden; and furthering the gleaning events at local farms and home gardens or orchards. The third and final year of the VISTA cycle will expand upon previous successes, by introducing food preservation education into this diverse approach to solving hunger issues for Okanogan County.

Volunteer Relations

Outreach

The outreach efforts for this program were heavily focused on making a community presence during the off-season months of winter and into the beginning of the growing season. Attending monthly meetings for existing community organizations and coalitions, local farmers market informational booths and having an active organization representative working with the community helped the outreach efforts earlier in the year. In a rural community "face time" is paramount.

Recruitment

Targeting organized groups during the off-season, outreach efforts and pin-pointing specific projects for these groups helped recruitment efforts. For example, a local organization has a commitment to donate one full work day per year towards community service. Instead of assembling a team from scratch, the Harvest VISTA reached out to this group and recruited them to volunteer with OCCAC by building a garden for a low-income family. Other recruitment efforts were made in public spaces such as farmers markets where new volunteers signed up on a general volunteer sign-up sheet. During early spring, seeds and surveys were distributed to food bank customers for the upcoming gardening season. Several volunteers were gained by this type of recruitment outreach.

- Seek out existing organizations that seek community involvement.
- Find businesses or groups that want to have a volunteer day, event or project.

Retention

As the age range for this season's volunteers was kindergarteners through senior citizens, retaining them was a challenge as different generations approach volunteering differently. Retention ranged from regular contact via phone or email, to a gradual increase of responsibilities forming lead volunteers. Some volunteers like working on their own schedule, while others like less responsibility and enjoy just "showing-up." In either event, flexibility is key. One-on-one attention and fitting the volunteer(s) to the event (or vice versa) seemed to be the best approach for retention.

Appreciation

A volunteer appreciation event was put in place last January as a way to generate off-season recognition to our 2010 volunteers and donors. A simple gathering with appetizers, beverages and mingling took place at the local grange hall. Additionally, previous end of year gleaning totals were shared and awards were handed out to lead volunteers and major donors. During the garden-building season and gleaning season thank you emails, cards and phone calls were administered to both volunteers and donors. A BBQ to kick-off the gleaning season was held adjacent to a Saturday Farmers Market and allowed existing and potential new volunteers to meet and learn about gleaning. Continual gathering events and small tokens of appreciation is the approach OCCAC has taken.

Donor Relations

Outreach

OCCAC repeated the outreach strategy of the first Harvest VISTA. This included off-season recruitment tactics focused on agricultural association meetings, trainings and farmers market presence. Communication by a gleaning spokesperson, in this case the Harvest VISTA, who is knowledgeable or experienced with farming or the agricultural industry and has a personality to engage farmers is very helpful in establishing relationships that benefit a gleaning program.

Communications

By attending farmer-focused events in the off-season and planning farm visits mid-winter, connections between the Harvest VISTA and the farmer could be planted or re-established for the next growing season. Being flexible to the factors of weather and seasonality is key, as knowing when to contact a farmer about a specific crop will vary by year. For example, the growing season in Okanogan County was three weeks late on average for most crops in 2011. This delayed the gleaning events from early July to the end of July for several varieties. Keeping the gleaning coordinator “on-call” to these elements of farming helped, but can lead to problems with volunteer recruitment. For example, gleans were sporadic and lacked a consistent schedule during the summer months. Scheduling ahead of time is key. Usually this was done through weekly or monthly contacts via phone to the donors.

Appreciation

Donors are called or thanked in-person by the gleaning coordinator and host site department manager on a non-formal basis, however, a seasonal newsletter, weekly blog and regular Facebook updates tout the growers who donate produce to the food banks. A gleaning graph was also developed this year showing pounds per farmer and crops donated. The pre-season BBQ and off-season appreciation event are also used to show donors appreciation as well as our volunteers. Tying in our donors to our volunteers is a good way to achieve community connections and future sustainability.

Liability

Educating donors about their protections under the “The Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act” is an essential part to establishing and maintaining good donor relations within a gleaning program. It is also an encouraged best practice to inform potential and existing donors that all volunteers have signed a liability waiver and confidentiality notice prior to any and all gleaning events. Determining donor preferences for volunteer engagement is important. Prior to a gleaning event, it is recommended to ask donors if children may glean and if so, what age range. For example a mid-sized commercial grower preferred that no minors worked in the fields as certain regulations currently in place within the agricultural industry. Other specific preferences requested included sign-in and sign-out sheets, hand-washing stations, restroom facilities and a no-dogs rule. Some farms were more stringent than others. Just make sure to be aware of and track each farmer’s preferences. Rapid adaptation to changing circumstances is key to donor relations.

Visibility



In a small community, such as Okanogan and the surrounding areas, visibility ranges from word-of-mouth, radio ads, newspaper coverage and general marketing approaches such as flyers and merchandising. A repeat visibility tactic is OCCAC’s annual “Food For All” T-shirt. This year an attempt was made to generate public interest with a T-shirt design contest. Visibility online was accomplished this year with the incorporation of a Facebook page with daily or weekly updates and a revamping of the “Food For All” blog. Our social media was mentioned in our quarterly newsletter and a link to our blog is on our

OCCAC website. Radio ads were utilized to find applicants and volunteers for the P.L.A.N.T. project during the winter months, which helped set-up recruitment efforts to pin-point agencies during early spring. Countywide outreach via flyers and brochures was also a way to gain visibility. One approach this year was a “branding” toward the marketing of “Food For All” by incorporating the T-shirt logo design into all documents, flyers and online materials, in the hope that recognizing an image would tie the variety of programs together.

Visibility was also attained through collaborative projects with existing local non-profits or educational programs. This year, in lieu of a nutrition education grant, a collaborative project was forged with a long-standing and well-supported community program of the local Washington State University (WSU) Extension Agency called Food \$ense. Five cooking classes were held at OCCAC and led by the WSU Extension instructors with the food bank customer. With the advantage of having a certified kitchen at the OCCAC office, this collaboration was achieved through steps gained from volunteer relation efforts earlier in the year. For example, the leader of an alternative high school class volunteered the students to build on-site gardens at a social services office located in one of OCCAC’s less-targeted towns. As we are hoping to inform the residents of that region about OCCAC’s food programs, this project tied two groups together to attain a common goal: gardens for low-income people.

Press coverage is another useful tool. Beyond networking and future alliance-building to aid the program, press coverage was achieved through this collaboration. Strategic press coverage tactics should be utilized for starting a produce recovery program, as it is crucial for the program’s success. Designate a press coverage cycle for the program prior to the growing seasons or any off-season events in order to attain visibility within your community. In rural communities, such as Okanogan, often the press for the local paper would be called ahead of a volunteer event and would pay a visit to the gardening or gleaning site. For example, a reporter was emailed the gleaning announcement a few days prior to the event. The reporter responded and sought more details. Using the host site’s chain-of-command, press coverage at the gleaning event was approved and the gleaning donor was informed of the upcoming coverage. With approval from the donor, the press attended the apple glean and coverage was attained.

Food Bank Garden

OCCAC started an on-site demonstration garden located at the Okanogan food bank and distribution center in 2009. Successive gardens have been planted, maintained and harvested in 2010 and 2011 with plans for continual use of this educational tool and fresh produce source for the adjacent food bank. Supplying a direct source of gleaned produce to a specific food bank is a great way to build a produce recovery program of any scale. Below are a few step-by-step recommendations based off of the third season at OCCAC’s on-site demonstration garden.

Location

Decide if the garden is on-site or off-site. On-site, OCCAC’s model.

1. Easy Access to food bank and customer. Potential volunteer source is your customers. Provide access to the garden during food bank hours with a staff or volunteer present to answer questions and for educational purposes.
2. Instant publicity. A visual demonstration of how to grow food generates interest to all who visit the food bank and adjacent areas. The on-site approach provides an educational tool at your host site.
3. Guaranteed source of produce. A designated source of fresh produce to the food bank keeps produce recovery fresh, local and reliable.

Scale

Decide on amounts, type, size, etc. Pick a baseline of “how much” produce you want to grow and fit the size of garden to your needs. Also determine which “style” of gardening to utilize. For example, OCCAC grows food for one food bank, uses twelve apple bins filled with a dirt/compost/manure blend and utilizes the square-foot method of gardening with organic practices. Hashing out these details prior to any further planning is essential. Identify the necessary materials and supplies necessary for the correct location and scale of the project. Identify potential donations to project. Designate the management of the garden to staff, volunteers, lead gardeners or groups of unskilled volunteers. Figuring out the specific order of operation will help down the line.

Work parties

For the project construction, building as well as planting events, can help generate community interest in the project. A maintenance schedule should also be arranged in advance. Assign proper staff hours and/or volunteer hours to upkeep, maintenance, replanting etc.

Harvesting Schedule

Coordinate with food bank distribution schedule and/or secure a convenient storage location with a cooler available.

Results

Develop a baseline goal for the project and how it will impact the food bank. For example, “increase fresh produce by 1 serving” or a survey of food bank customer opinions on access to fresh produce before and after the season are used at OCCAC. These baselines can be utilized for larger scale projects down the road or for future grants.

End of Season

Review surveys, production amounts, garden plans, successes, failures and incorporate all information into future planning.

Home Garden Construction

OCCAC planted ten gardens this past spring as part of the P.L.A.N.T. (People Learning Agriculture and Nutrition Together) program. The program included a gleaning element but was focused on home garden construction for low-income families receiving WIC within Okanogan County. The home garden construction of the grant included three elements of community:

- ...► Qualifying families interested in gardening
- ...► Mentors to assist families
- ...► Volunteer groups to construct the gardens.

The goal of this project is to create community around a common theme, home gardens, by reaching a wide range of groups from WSU Master Gardeners to community college students. While community gardens are successful elsewhere, a history of failed attempts at community gardens and the geography of this region dictated a different approach. The rural setting and travel required to access food banks, grocery stores or farmable land vary throughout the region. By building gardens in the families' backyards, similar to the victory gardens during WWII, food security and access to fresh produce are literally outside the doorstep for low-income families. These gardens utilized the square-foot method of gardening and each family was provided one 8 foot by 4 foot raised bed garden as well as all materials, seeds, plants and irrigation elements necessary for this type of gardening. Through OCCAC grant sponsors and collaborators, gardens were planted countywide.

Below are ten points to consider before starting a home garden construction program.

1. Target Your Goals
 - ♦ **Recipient population** - do they have particular needs, like senior citizens, low-income families or Spanish speaking?
 - ♦ **Metrics** - measures of success like, “increase access to produce by 2-3 servings weekly.”
 - ♦ **Education** - skills training, nutrition, construction.
2. Develop partnerships specific to home garden construction. Pursue co-grantees or supporting organizations or find a self-sustainable approach. Clearly define a budget to dictate the amount and type of home gardens your agency provides.
3. Divide budget to amount of desired gardens for program based on cost-for-cost estimates on a full garden build and planting. Choose type of garden and materials. Look for donation sources for materials like plant starts, manure, seeds, etc.
4. Define selection criteria for recipients, educators/mentors, volunteer groups. OCCAC applications included a “needs survey.” Also considered were general criteria requirements, rental versus ownership information. This information was compiled and used to develop a rank-based system that took into account the date applied and proximity to available mentors. Site visits were used to attain important information in the process of deciding on recipients. For example, you need to see if a garden is even feasible at the families' dwellings. Other factors considered included availability of a water source and seasonal versus permanent housing. A similar screening was done for the mentors and volunteer groups. Inform all parties of their roles and the overarching goals of the project before they commit.
5. Campaign for applicants. Utilize media and program outreach venues. Review applicants based on pre-determined criteria.
6. Select applicants and determine schedules. Give applicants two date options to commit to a garden installation/ planting and then schedule based on their preference. Keep in mind that if a recipient can't commit to the build they may not commit to the entire growing season. For example, an applicant family failed to be at the garden build on the assigned date so a second date was made. A month after install, a site-check by the assigned mentor found the garden

neglected.

7. Provide pre-season engagement for applicants. A lead-up to the gardening season was not done this year but is built into OCCAC's grant for next year. Assessing families before the gardening season can help "weed out" commitment levels and can help determine what skill level the family has at present time prior to the program. Pre-season engagement was used via a mentor-training workshop teaching the agency's selected gardening methods.
8. Schedule, Schedule, Schedule! Scheduling was the biggest challenge faced this season at OCCAC. A late growing season, due to the long wet spring weather, plus multiple recipient cancellations led to a back-log of the garden installations and plantings. Pre-determine dates and limit recipients/volunteers to two options and stick to them no matter the weather. Assure materials are on-hand prior to assigned dates.
9. Growing season tracking and site visits are recommended to help recipients succeed. OCCAC partnered with individual mentors as advocates for the project after the builds. The end-of-season should include surveys, reviews and comments from all groups to incorporate into the next year of gardening and for measuring grant requirements of the program.
10. Review the program and begin strategic planning for the next season.

Gleaning Resource Guide #8

At Lettuce Link

BY AMERICORPS*VISTA MOLLY WOODRING

Background and History

Lettuce Link is one of over 30 programs of Solid Ground, a large social service agency that serves Seattle and King County. In keeping with Solid Ground's mission of "building community to end poverty," Lettuce Link seeks to create equal access to nourishing, healthy, culturally appropriate food by providing organic produce, seeds, starts, and gardening information to those living on low-incomes.

Since 1988, we've worked with community gardeners in Seattle's P-Patches to grow extra produce for local food banks. In the years since, our program has grown to include two urban farms that grow for the food banks in their neighborhoods, educational programming for children, annual seed distributions, and a backyard fruit gleaning program.

Volunteer Relations

Outreach/recruitment

We use a wide range of methods for recruiting new volunteers:

- Tabling at volunteer fairs, plant sales and harvest fairs, food- and urban agriculture-related events, and events held by organizations with similar missions.
- Emailing local listservs about specific volunteer opportunities.
- Neighborhood outreach, including distributing flyers door-to-door.
- Providing service learning and internship opportunities for local students.
- Posting on sites like Volunteer Match and Idealist.
- Using local media, such as Seattle's neighborhood blogs.
- Using social media, including Lettuce Link's facebook page and the Solid Ground twitter account.

Training

We hold orientations for new Community Fruit Tree Harvest volunteers before harvest season begins, usually in July. We go over how the harvest works, how to tell when fruit is ripe and how to pick it, and general safety. In 2011, we also started including a segment called "Communicating Across Differences" in an effort to begin an open dialogue with our volunteers about how the backgrounds of staff and volunteers can differ from those receiving fruit, and how those differences can influence our interactions.

When planning a volunteer training, you may want to consider:

- **Location:** If you are asking folks to volunteer in their neighborhood, they probably expect the training to happen there, too.

- **Timing:** Show your volunteers that you value their time by beginning and ending on schedule.
- **Visuals:** Ideally, you would hold an orientation under a fruit tree. But if that's not an option, you can still bring equipment to the training and demonstrate how to use it!
- **Paperwork:** Orientations are a great time to have volunteers fill out any remaining paperwork, such as applications and media releases.
- **Follow-up:** Is there a way for your volunteers to get started right away? If not, what can they expect next?

Communication

When volunteers fill out our Community Fruit Tree Harvest volunteer application, they select the neighborhoods in which they would like to help harvest. They then receive email alerts about harvesting opportunities in those neighborhoods.

Depending on when and where there is ripe fruit, this communication can be quite sporadic. To keep volunteers engaged and informed, we also send biweekly updates to the whole group. These updates include things such as:

- Announcements and logistical details that pertain to everyone.
- A running total of the amount of fruit we've harvested.
- What fruit we're harvesting now and what's coming up next.
- Upcoming events of interest.
- Organizational updates and events.

Recognition

We strive to recognize fruit harvest volunteers on several levels:

- At the harvest: Whether they've harvested 10 pounds or 100 pounds, it's something to be proud of!
- After the harvest: Many volunteers are attracted to the very tangible results of the fruit harvest, so they want to know exactly how many pounds were harvested and where the fruit went.
- At the end of the season: Lettuce Link holds a program-wide volunteer appreciation potluck at the end of the summer, but we've also held smaller gatherings for fruit harvest volunteers.
- Publicly: volunteers are hugely important to Lettuce Link's work, and we want the world to know. We post updates, pictures, and volunteer spotlights on our blog and facebook page.

Donor Relations

Outreach

We recruit new fruit donors in several ways:

- Asking current donors and volunteers to encourage neighbors and friends to give.
- Tabling at plant sales and harvest fairs, food- and urban agriculture-related events, etc.
- Emailing local listservs.
- Door-to-door canvassing*.
- Using local media, such as Seattle's neighborhood blogs.
- Using social media, including Lettuce Link's facebook page and the Solid Ground twitter account.
 - ♦ While talking to someone directly is best, if you're going to leave a flyer, remember that it's illegal to leave it in someone's mailbox. We tuck them in the door, under the doormat, or rolled up in the door handle.

Screening

We are very lucky to partner with Seattle Tilth, a local gardening nonprofit, on the intake process for new fruit trees. Homeowners can call their Garden Hotline and give information about their fruit tree, and the Hotline staff passes this

information along to the correct fruit harvesting organization. Our Donor Survey asks about tree health, accessibility, and homeowner concerns.

Communication

We get in touch with previous donors early in the season and follow up as needed. Most of our donors are very understanding about the back-and-forth it can take to know when fruit is truly ripe, but we try to streamline the process as much as possible. We've found it can help to:

- Give homeowners specific signs of ripeness to look for (ex. Black seeds on apples, plums just starting to soften, etc.).
- Tell them early on that it can take a few days to get volunteers together.
- Ask them up front if they want to be there when you come, if they want to know when volunteers are coming, or if it's fine to just drop by. Some homeowners just want to look out the window one day and see that the fruit has been harvested!

Harvesting

In terms of donor relations, there are several things you should keep in mind while harvesting:

- Leave the yard as you found it. If the gate was closed, close it on your way out. Be careful of gardens and landscaping.
- Clean up after harvesting. Try to pick up any fallen fruit and branches—often you can find the yard waste bin to leave them in.
- Respect the tree. Harvest carefully and don't climb the tree.
- Be safe. Besides concerns about liability, homeowners don't want anyone to get hurt!
- Leave a note or flyer. We leave a "Thank You" flyer behind, and often write a quick note on it about where the fruit is going.

Recognition/Follow-up

Just as volunteers want to know the results of a harvest, most homeowners do as well. We always follow up each harvest with a report of how many pounds were harvested, where the fruit went, and any other details about the harvest. For example, we'll often tell homeowners that while we harvested everything we could reach, some of the fruit was just too high. Or if the tree is showing signs of infestation, we include some information about tree care.

At the end of the season, we send another thank you to all donors. This letter shares the final results of the harvest and asks them to consider making a financial donation to keep the harvest going.

Community Fruit Tree Harvest

Lettuce Link's Community Fruit Tree Harvest (CFTH) is a residential gleaning program for fruit trees in Seattle. Since the program began in 2005, CFTH volunteers have harvested over 50,000 of organic fruit for local food banks, shelters, and meal programs.

Where to Harvest

The CFTH originally focused exclusively on one neighborhood, but word quickly spread and the harvest expanded accordingly. In the last few years, we have shifted towards a neighborhood-centered approach, in which key volunteers in each neighborhood serve as the point person for that area.

What to Harvest

We harvest mostly apples, pears, plums, and Asian pears. These fruits are popular, durable, and common in Seattle backyards. We also choose to harvest fruit only from unsprayed trees, in keeping with Lettuce Link's commitment to providing fresh, organic produce. Often, this can mean contending with wormy, scabby, or otherwise blemished fruit. While some locations can take small amounts of cooking apples, we generally don't harvest this fruit for donation. In 2011, however, we did harvest many pounds of wormy and/or scabby apples for community cider pressings.

How to Harvest

We organize harvests in a variety of ways, and each has its pros and cons:

- Send tree/owner information to the neighborhood Harvest Leader and he/she takes it from there.
 - ♦ Pros: Increased volunteer independence, more connected to the community, good way to engage new volunteers.
 - ♦ Cons: More back-and-forth for homeowner, can take a little longer, don't want to overwhelm Harvest Leaders with more than 1-2 harvests/week.
- Send an open-ended request to volunteer list. Respond to volunteers who are available with more details and allow them to self-organize a harvest.
 - ♦ Pros: Good for volunteers who prefer to work independently, can get trees harvested very quickly, saves staff time.
 - ♦ Cons: Intimidating to new volunteers, harvest can fall through, need to make equipment available to volunteers, need to make sure volunteers know where to bring fruit and what data to report back.
- Set a time with homeowner and put out call to volunteers:
 - ♦ Pros: Great for new volunteers, good chance to meet volunteers and build relationships, more control over harvest and data collection.
 - ♦ Cons: Takes more staff time, sometimes no volunteers are available (sometime too many!), more removed from community

Where to Donate

We deliver fruit to a wide range of organizations, and which one receives a particular harvest depends on what and when we harvest. Lettuce Link maintains a "Where to Donate" document on our website. We update it annually with food bank/shelter/meal program hours, locations, donation and distribution times, and preferences. When donating fruit, we look for a location that is nearby, open, able to take the amount of fruit we have, and distributing in the next day or so.

Neighborhood Harvest Leaders

Neighborhood Harvest Leaders serve as the CFTH point people in their neighborhoods. These key volunteers work with volunteers and homeowners to organize and lead an average of 1-2 harvests per week.

Coordinating with Tree Owners

The CFTH is lucky to have a long list of tree owners who donate their fruit each year. We contact them early in the summer and continue to follow up with homeowners throughout the harvest season, relying heavily on the Donor Master spreadsheet to stay organized.

We also do lots of outreach for new donors via email listservs, our website and blog, putting up flyers around the city, and tabling at events. Word of mouth remains one of our best methods for finding new donors, and we encourage all of our volunteers to look for fruit trees around their neighborhoods and to talk to or leave flyers with those homeowners.

Recording and Reporting

We use the donor master spreadsheet to track when we harvest each tree, how many volunteers help, how many hours they spend, what equipment was needed, and where the fruit was donated. We also keep track of total poundage by neighborhood and fruit type and also update a distribution log to show where the fruit is going and how evenly spread it is.

Plant Starts

Growing Food, Growing Community (GFGC) is the product of a motivated group of neighborhood volunteers who wanted to put a backyard greenhouse to good use. Over the past few years, they have connected with Lettuce Link to grow high-quality plant starts for P-Patch food bank gardeners. In 2011, they provided approximately 5,000 starts to P-Patch food bank gardens, community gardens, and low-income gardeners.

Where to grow

Although GFGC is a community effort, it is only possible with the enthusiastic support of Cyrus Appell, who owns the greenhouse and therefore stores much of the equipment, allows unrestricted daytime access to his yard for 2-3 volunteers each day, and fronts the water and electricity costs the greenhouse incurs.

That said, there are many potential locations for a similar project. In addition to private residences, many schools have greenhouses. You could fundraise to build a greenhouse on the property of a community organization or garden, church, etc. You could even invest in fluorescent lights and grow starts indoors!

What to grow

In determining what to grow, it's important to keep in mind the preferences of food bank customers, food banks, and the gardeners who will be growing the food. Early in the season, Lettuce Link surveyed P-Patch giving gardeners to see what starts they wanted and used the relative popularity of each request to guide the goals of GFGC. See the P-Patch Growing & Giving section for more recommendations.

Volunteers

There are two levels of involvement in GFGC:

- **Managers** – this group of 5-7 volunteers oversees planning, fundraising, and day-to-day operations. Each manager is assigned one day of the week to check in on the greenhouse. He/she makes sure that plants are watered and fertilized as needed, sets to-dos for daily volunteers, and checks in with and updates the other managers as needed. The managers group also takes care of:
 - ♦ Recruiting volunteers
 - ♦ Sending a weekly email update
 - ♦ Holding a volunteer training at the beginning of the season
 - ♦ Organizing volunteer potlucks throughout the season
 - ♦ Communicating with the other managers
- **Daily volunteers** – each daily volunteer is assigned one day of the week to work in the greenhouse, with 2-3 volunteers assigned to each day. They can work independently or arrange a time to meet (though the greenhouse can only comfortably hold two people). With a general guideline of 1 hour/week, they are responsible for:
 - ♦ Seeding new trays
 - ♦ Transplanting seedlings to 4" pots
 - ♦ Watering and fertilizing as needed
 - ♦ Recording daily activities in the greenhouse journal and on the tracking sheet
 - ♦ Greenhouse maintenance

Distributing starts

In 2011, Lettuce Link took responsibility for distributing starts, and we found it worked best to set up a weekly system:

1. On Mondays, LL picked up all the starts that were ready and sent a notice to the listserv of P-Patch food bank gardeners.
2. Gardeners responded with what they wanted and whether they could pick them up or needed them delivered. Starts were set aside on a first-come, first-served basis.
3. LL staff packaged and labeled starts for pickup. Gardeners could come to get them at the Solid Ground office Tuesday through Friday.
4. On Thursday or Friday, LL staff delivered starts to gardens that couldn't pick them up.

Recordkeeping

After surveying P-Patch gardeners, we were able to set goals and plan accordingly. By tracking how many trays we had seeded and/or transplanted as we went along, we were able to know when to stop and move onto another crop. We also learned:

- Using 18-pot trays as a unit of measurement made it easier to keep things consistent.
- We ended up with huge amounts of some crops after transplanting due to heavily seeded trays and not enough thinning.

Not all crops and varieties were equally popular. By taking notes along the way and soliciting feedback from gardeners at the end of the season, we learned which crops grew well, which ones failed to thrive, and how we could improve operations for next year.

Funding and Materials

Covering costs is a big concern for GFGC. In addition to repaying Cyrus for water and electricity expenses, the group also needs to pay for materials. We tried to mitigate these costs in several ways:

- Gardeners that received starts were asked to return pots and trays once they had finished planting. By repeating this request in every announcement about starts, we achieved a very good return rate.
- A local landscaping company donated enough pots and trays to meet most of our needs.
- We put out a call for large yogurt containers and cut them into strips to use as labels. Once you've removed the bottom of the container, using a paper cutter to cut the strips made this task much less tedious.
- Cedar Grove donated almost enough potting soil to cover all of our needs.

Of course, some fundraising was still necessary. One of the managers applied for a small grant from the City of Seattle, which we received. Another manager runs a small produce stand at her house and sold some of our extra starts for a suggested donation. This also proved to be a great outreach opportunity within the neighborhood.

P-Patch Growing And Giving

P-Patches are community gardens located throughout Seattle, and are run by the city's Department of Neighborhoods. Most are divided into individual plots, with common herb or flower gardens, tool sheds, and gathering spaces.

Since 1988, Lettuce Link has worked with P-Patch gardeners to connect the bounty of Seattle's P-Patches with the need for fresh produce in the emergency food system. Each year, P-Patch Giving Gardeners grow and donate over 20,000 pounds of fresh, organic produce to local shelters, meal programs, and food banks.

Where/how to grow

There are three main approaches to Growing & Giving, and many P-Patches utilize all three:

- Most P-Patches have at least one dedicated food bank plot, called a Giving Garden. One or more Giving Garden coordinators oversee planting, harvesting, and delivery, while other volunteers help with each of these tasks. All P-Patch gardeners have to complete at least 8 hours of volunteering in their P-Patch, and many choose to help in the Giving Garden.
- Giving Garden coordinators also encourage other gardeners to Grow a Row in their own plots. They are responsible for planting and harvesting, and there is often a designated area to leave donations, so that they can be delivered along with the harvest from the Giving Garden.
- Gleaning can generate a huge amount of produce to donate, while preventing waste and keeping gardens productive. Some gardens use a system of flags or stakes to indicate which plots/rows/crops can be harvested for donation. Most ask gardeners to alert Giving Gardeners if they're going out of town and will allow their plot to be gleaned while they're gone. At least one P-Patches asks each gardener to agree to "light picking" of his or her plot on food bank harvest days.

What to grow

- First, think about the preferences of food bank customers:
 - ♦ Learn about the customerele of the food bank you'll be donating to, and do your best to provide culturally appropriate produce.
 - ♦ Choose familiar varieties. Odd-looking vegetables benefit from a certain degree of explanation that food bank staff and volunteers may not have the time or expertise to provide.
 - ♦ Only donate clean, unblemished fruits and veggies. If you wouldn't buy it for yourself, don't donate it.
 - ♦ Herbs are often a big hit!
- Each food bank is different. Check in with the staff before you begin donating, and keep in mind:
 - ♦ Whatever you donate will have to withstand a certain degree of handling before it goes home with anyone. Don't donate produce that is overripe or easily bruised.
 - ♦ Ask about how to package donations. Don't waste your time bagging veggies if they'll only be dumped and repackaged!
 - ♦ Food banks that are very busy may not be able to accept smaller donations. If you only have a small amount of each type of produce, check with local shelters and meal programs. Anywhere that cooks on-site may be able to make better use of smaller amounts of produce.

- ♦ Most food banks already receive lots of potatoes and storing onions through the commodity system, and would prefer to receive other fresh veggies.
- Since the gardeners maintaining the food bank plot are often doing so as volunteers, try to keep things low-maintenance:
 - ♦ Herbs and vegetables such as greens can be harvested over and over, saving you the work of planting and re-planting. Some will even reseed themselves at the end of the season!
 - ♦ Growing just one or two crops means less work for gardeners and larger harvests for food banks.

When to harvest

Ideally, you would harvest and deliver produce the same day that the food bank will distribute it—and many food banks would prefer to take donations before distribution begins so they have time to process everything. But if that isn't an option, you need to find a way to store and keep produce fresh at your garden. Many P-Patches have a designated area of the shed where gardeners can drop off produce they would like to donate. This area often includes a scale and logbook, extra bags and boxes, and a cooler for storing greens and other highly perishable veggies. Another great way to keep greens fresh is to keep bunches of them in buckets of water until right before they are ready to be delivered.

Make sure to wash the produce well and keep it separated by type. Check in with the food bank to see if they would prefer the produce be bagged or boxed. If you'll be donating a large quantity on a weekly basis, they may be willing to provide you with reusable crates. Finally, don't forget to label everything! Some of the veggies you've grown may be unfamiliar to food bank staff, volunteers, and customers, and some veggies are just plain hard to recognize, especially out of the context of the garden. Lettuce Link has a great set of multilingual labels available on our website (scroll to the bottom of the page).

Where to donate

Ideally, you will be donating on a regular basis (whether it's weekly, biweekly, or monthly) throughout the growing season. So when you're looking for a place to donate, choose somewhere that you can build a relationship with. Make sure that they are a good fit in terms of what you're able and willing to grow, and that you'll be able to come up with a delivery schedule that works for everyone.

How to get others involved

The more you integrate the idea of Growing & Giving into the culture of your garden, the more successful you'll be in getting others involved! Here are some ideas:

- Give new gardeners a Plant a Row sign and a packet of seeds along with their plot assignment.
- Involve the food bank plot in every garden-wide work party.
- Keep a running tally of how many pounds you've donated and let people know! Some gardens use a thermometer-style poster to display poundage, others challenge individual gardeners to make it into the "100+ club."
- Find a job for everyone—what can you delegate? Maybe not everyone can help with major work parties, but they may be able to deliver produce, water on off-days, grow starts, maintain tools, etc!
- Look beyond the garden. Many of the most successful P-Patch Giving Gardens have dedicated volunteers who aren't even plotheholders. Reach out to the community, or find a way to work with local schools or community organizations.
- Tending to the Giving Garden can be a great way to learn about gardening. If you pitch it that way, you'll have lots of eager volunteers who want to learn more!

[Looking for more resources? Visit our website and download our Giving Garden Tips.](#)

Lessons Learned

- Fruit is hard to predict. One of my biggest challenges this year was how delayed the fruit harvest was. Even though I thought I scheduled volunteer orientations accordingly, there was still a gap before the harvesting really started. If I had been better prepared, I could have gotten volunteers more involved in outreach and scouting trees during this gap.
- You won't know until you ask. There were times when I was hesitant to ask volunteers for help with something, whether it was a very last minute harvest or something outside of what they normally did. But almost every time I put

out such a request, I was overwhelmed with responses!

- Everybody likes plants. While working with the Wallingford Greenhouse, I noticed that anytime I went somewhere carrying a tray of plant starts, everyone wanted to talk to me! Some wanted to know what type of plants they were, some asked about the project, and others told me about their own gardens. Few could resist “petting” the plants, either. It was a great reminder that often times the interest may be there, but it takes something extra to spark a conversation.

Gleaning Resource Guide #9: Harvest for Hope

At Skagit County Community Action Agency

BY AMERICORPS*VISTA EMILY NELSON

Harvest Against Hunger expanded its project to the greater Mt. Vernon area in 2010 to build and strengthen produce recovery efforts in Skagit County. Great inroads were made the first year in expanding a gleaning project, growing a Victory Garden and rescuing produce at a farmers markets.

Brief History:

Skagit County Community Action Agency SCCAA, is the Community Action Program for Skagit County. Community Action Agencies (CAA) are local private and public non-profit organizations that carry out the Community Action Program (CAP), which was founded by the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act to fight poverty by empowering the poor in the United States and its territories, as part of the War on Poverty¹.

Community Action has a Food Access Department which runs several food programs. These programs include:

Mobile Food Express

- This program delivers food to the elderly and disabled who are home bound and unable to make it to the food bank. Food for this program is prepared by food banks in the county.

Basic Food Outreach

- SCCAA is able to fill out the paper work to sign people up for basic food (e.g. food stamps). This program does out reach in order to contact those eligible for the program.

Food Bank Distribution Center

- This is a warehouse facility with dry storage, cooler, and freezer. This site acts as a centralized location for large shipments of food that are delivered from Food Lifeline and Northwest Harvest. Every week, all 14 food banks of Skagit County come to the distribution center in order to get the food from these programs.

Harvest for Hope

- This is the gleaning program for Skagit County, which harvests produce from local growers. The program was initially started in the winter of 2010 and had its first growing season in 2011.

Victory Gardens

- This program encourages local gardeners to grow food for their local food banks, and donate any excess produce they may have. It was established in 2009-2010 and is now in its second year.

Skagit Food Share Alliance

- Program which uses money raised from the community to purchase food from local growers to go to the food bank.

Current Activities



Harvest for Hope was initiated in 2010 as a joint project between Rotary First Harvest, AmeriCorps*VISTA and Skagit County Community Action Agency. This produce recovery program gleans from local growers, homeowners, and farmers markets. The program focused on building relationships between local growers and grower organizations in the winter and spring. Through such outreach an important relationship was built with the Skagit Valley Food Co-op, which was extremely beneficial in reaching out to the community, and developing the legitimacy of the program. Due to a late growing season, gleaning did not pick up until late July, but ran rather strong for most of August and early September. During this time we have gained the trust of many growers in the area due to the program being highly organized. Next year we hope to expand the program to include fruit tree harvests from homeowners.

Gleaning Program Visibility

When trying to get a new program into the community, it is important that that program has a strong and consistent image. This sort of branding helps your audiences recognize the program, and assures them that the program is organized and reliable. Part of this identity should include

- Program Name
- Mission statement
- Catch Phrase
- Photo/Image

Program Name

The name of your program is very important. It is your first opportunity to convey information about what program tries to accomplish for your beneficiary. Whatever name you pick, you should stick with it! When names change it can be confusing. Try brainstorming with friends and work associates to come up with a name. Also, make sure there are no other programs in your area with the same or very similar name.

The name decided upon for the gleaning program in Skagit County was Harvest for Hope. After looking at different programs in our area we discovered that there was already a group called the Skagit Gleaners, which gleaned from local food stores. We knew to avoid confusion we did not want to use the word gleaners in our name. Thus we leaned towards harvest instead. We also wanted our name to have a positive tone, so hope seemed liked the right fit.

Mission statement

The mission statement is the purpose of the program. It is important that the statement is as concise as possible. This statement will tell your audience exactly what you are trying to achieve.

Our missions statement is: “Our mission is to increase the supply of fresh, nutritious produce to Skagit County food banks and hot meal programs through gleaning from local farms and gardens.”

Catch Phrase

This is not critical for a program but can be helpful. They are usually short and have a lyrical quality. This statement can often be found with logos. It is usually memorable, and comes to your audiences mind when they see the program logo.

The catch phrase for our gleaning program is “Glean it like you mean it!” It is short, and rhymes, and is easy to remember. We were aiming for something up beat that would get people motivated.

Photo/Image

This can be a logo for the program, or just an image you use with all of your handouts. This makes your program easily recognizable. Further, it is important to choose a color scheme, and stick with it. When you think about all the brands you are familiar with, a certain color and image always comes to mind first. These make a program pop.

Social Media

Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, can be a good way to keep stakeholders up to date with your program. However, it is less useful as a recruiting tool. Most growers do not frequently use this type of social media, and it is unlikely that volunteers will stumble across your social media. It is still very important, as it often allows you to show program pictures and tell stories. Use it as a way to keep people interested in your program, or as a reference to those who contact you about getting involved.

Newspapers and Radio

These can be very important resources for your program, especially if you are located in a medium to small community. Oftentimes, local newspapers contact information is listed on their website. If you work within another organization, you will want to ask around and find if they already have a specific contact. Also, be aware of the audience of your article, the more targeted information you can give, the more effective your article will be. For example, with a magazine specifically targeted towards growers you will want to provide information such as how they are protected from liability and what their benefits are for participating in a gleaning program.

Websites

Websites are a great tool for spreading information about your program. It is important that your program has one main web address. This is most likely going to connect to the greater website of your organization. Once you have this set up, you can multiple its effectiveness through connections to other sites. Take the time to search the web and find the websites of different agricultural, food, and volunteer groups in your area. Once you have a good list contact them, and ask them if they can post information about your program. With a link to your webpage you can limit the text that needs to go on their site, and thus make it less burdensome on the host site. In addition, such cross hosting can improve search engine results for your program and increase visibility.

Gleaning Grower/ Donor Relations

FINDING AND CONTACTING DONORS: RESOURCES TO UTILIZE

When contacting growers for gleaning, trust is the most important and difficult quality necessary for a successful relationship. Many growers are hesitant to work with individuals and organizations they are not familiar with, and for good reason. Liability is a huge concern for growers, as is allowing strangers onto their farm. **The best way to reach growers is through legitimate agricultural organizations in your community. These can include:**

- ...> State agricultural extension offices
- ...> Local business and organizations that work with the agricultural community
- ...> Food co-ops
- ...> State agricultural insurance companies
- ...> Food banks

It is important to first contact these established groups with information about your program, and then ask them to either pass on the information directly to the growers of your area, or indirectly by referring the growers to you.

Suggestion: SCCAA already had a program establish called the Skagit Food Share Alliance. This program raised funds from the community, and then used those donations to purchase fresh produce from local growers. Due to this program, there was already a relationship established between SCCAA and the local growing community. Thus, the majority of growers that were originally contacted were already familiar with and had benefitted from SCCAA.

Talking to your local food banks is also a great way to find growers who are potentially open to gleaning. Many growers already directly donate to food banks, and therefore are open to the idea of giving produce to the emergency food system. These growers should be contacted as gleaning might make donating food easier for them.

Contacting Growers: Methods

When contacting growers you have a limited number of options:

- ...➤ Phone
- ...➤ Email
- ...➤ Letter
- ...➤ Flyers
- ...➤ In person

Phone

Cold calls are not highly recommended, as they often get a negative reaction from growers, and may make them less likely to participate in the future. It is ideal to call growers only when you have a direct referral. It is also best in this situation if the person who is referring you can be on the call with you and introduce you to the grower.

Email/ Letter

For those growers who are cold contacts, a non direct primary form of contact is ideal. This can include sending them a letter or an email. After enough time has passed you may then call the grower on the phone.

Flyers

To “recruit” growers who you do not have contact information, flyers are a great way advertise. Best are flyers that have pull away tabs with contact information at the bottom. These should be put in places where growers are likely to visit, such as extension offices and agricultural supply stores.

In Person

It is ideal no matter how you initially contact growers to visit their actual property. This is best done in the off season when growers are less busy. This gives you the opportunity to become familiar with their location, which is helpful when giving directions to volunteers when you go back to glean. It also helps build trust because growers get to see you, and know that you value your relationship as you are putting time into seeing them.

Also, use this as an opportunity to see their farm and ask questions about gleaning, such as: where would you like volunteers to park, do you have bathrooms they can use. Meeting growers in person also gives you an opportunity to be introduced to other growers. Let the farmer know you are looking for more people who are interested in participating. Ask them if they know anyone who might be interested, as they will likely know other growers in the area. Then, when contacting that grower, let them know who referred you.

Contacting Growers: What to Bring When Contacting Growers in Person

When visiting a grower this is an opportunity to exchange materials. Make a folder for the grower, which should include, but is not limited to:

- ...➤ Pamphlet with Basic Information
 - ◆ This should include information about the need in your community and how growers are protected from liability. Liability is usually a top concern for growers, so addressing it out right before they have even asked will assure them that you know what you are doing, and you have their best interest in mind.
- ...➤ Copy of the Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act
 - ◆ This clearly states how growers are protected during and after gleaning. Not all growers are aware that this law exists, so it is important to that they have a copy.
- ...➤ Survey With Questions About the Grower
 - ◆ This allows you to collect information about growers that will be useful once the growing season starts, plus it gives you a hard copy of their contact information. This should be kept on file.
- ...➤ Copy of Your Gleaning Form

- ♦ This shows the growers the information you will need from them when they call. This is helpful for growers because they will know ahead of time what information you will need from them.
- Copy Of Volunteer Rules
 - ♦ This is very important because it shows your volunteers will be well trained, and you are knowledgeable about working on farms. Also, always make sure to ask growers to tell you if they have anything to add to the list. They might think of something you have missed, and it makes them know you appreciate their knowledge.

By having all these papers with you it shows you are organized, have thought out gleaning, and thus will be successful. Also, the language you use to construct your relationship with the grower is very important. When talking to the grower you do not want to approach them with the expectation that they will definitely donate food. Instead, you want to address the program as a benefit to them, by making donating food as easy as possible for them. Let them know they do not have to make any promises, but you are just available to them if they happen to have some food to donate. Then, after having worked with the grower for at least a year, you may want to re-approach them and ask them for a pledge. However, this is not necessarily something all growers will be open to, so make sure to get to know the grower and assess whether this is something they might do.

Gleaning Volunteer Relations:

Training Volunteers

It is important before volunteers start gleaning that they have a clear sense of what to expect and what is expected of them. Making handouts that give them clear instructions helps insure gleaning runs smoothly, and you do not cause any problems that will lose the trust of the grower.

It is also important volunteers are aware of the Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act as they are required to follow it. Make sure they have a copy. In addition to this, having volunteers sign a waiver can add one more level of comfort to growers.

Coordinating Volunteers

Gleans are often hard to predict and therefore difficult to plan ahead of time. The best way to manage your volunteers is usually through an email listserv. This way, every time there is a new opportunity you can quickly get the information out to all volunteers without wasting time calling people. There are many different websites available for creating email lists online.

With Harvest for Hope we made a Google group in order to keep in contact with our volunteers. Anyone that joins the group gets all emails that are sent to the group. This system has worked fairly well, although there are a few disadvantages. It allows everyone to communicate with each other, so volunteers can see how many people have already responded to a glean. This can be a down side for some though, as it means more emails. Further, you have no way of checking to see if people are reading the emails you send out, which some other LISTSERVs can allow.

When sending emails to volunteers keep a similar format from email to email. This will save volunteers time when reading emails, and mitigate frustration if they get a lot of emails in a small time. The email should include straight forward bullet points, which can be quickly scanned. An example of what to include is below.

- Date
- Time
- Address
- Farm
- Produce
- Special Instructions

Suggestion: At SCCAA, in the first year of our program we had a limited number of volunteers. In order to cope with our smaller volunteer base, an email was sent out asking volunteers to respond when they were available. The glean was then scheduled around these times to include the ideal number of volunteers. Although this can create a few emails, it is one of the best options when your volunteer base is limited.

Once you have this listserv you can use it for other purposes than just announcing gleanings. You can use it to send out program newsletters or a thank you to volunteers for helping.

Volunteer Appreciation

Showing thanks to your volunteers is extremely important. Food recovery programs rely heavily on volunteers to work, and if you want volunteers to keep coming back you need to show them how important they are. There are many ways to do this, which includes, but is not limited to:

- ...► Thank you emails/cards
- ...► T-shirts or buttons
- ...► Newsletters highlighting volunteers
- ...► End of season gathering with volunteers (pot luck, etc)

Suggestion: At the end of each month with our program we send out an email called Volunteer Appreciation. Included is this email the volunteers are thanked for their help, told how many hours they have put in, how much food was gleaned, and the volunteers with the most number of hours.

Volunteers Taking Food

Whether or not you let volunteers take some food they have gleaned is a decision to be made by the program developers. This can be a great incentive for volunteers to come out and help, and is another way of showing your appreciation for the time they are giving. However, it is important if volunteers take gleaned food clear expectations are established from the onset. Usually this just consists of letting them know that they should only take what they will definitely use.

Gleaning Recipient Relations

Spreading the Word About Your Program

At the end of the day, the whole point of gleaning is getting food to those in need. Thus, it is crucial for the success of any gleaning program to have strong connections to the food banks and meal programs in your area that will ultimately be distributing your food. The first step is always compiling a list of local food banks and their contact information. Such lists often already exist and can be found easily online.

Next you need to contact these food banks and tell them about your program. If you are working within a county that has several food banks it is very likely these food banks have a food bank association and meet together in one place. This is an ideal time to talk about your program. Make sure to bring handouts specifically targeted to food banks. If no such meeting exists contact the food banks individually and set up a meeting. Either way, you will eventually want to make sure you speak with each food bank on an individual basis. Also, keep in mind not all food banks may be interested in receiving gleaning donations. Some food banks have limited capacity for dealing with food that needs preparation or cold storage.

Gathering Important Information

To effectively work with food banks and meal programs you will need a lot of information about how they run. This includes things such as:

- ...► Freezer storage capacity
- ...► Cooler storage capacity
- ...► Hours of operation

- ...► Important Contacts
- ...► Relative size of distribution
- ...► Their capacity to process (wash, bag, etc)

All this and more can be gathered in a survey. In addition to this survey, you want to write up a weekly schedule of their hours of operation. Even though they may only be open one day a week to distribute food, a person might be present at the food bank on non-service hours, and willing to receive donations. It is also useful to know what sort of tracking each food bank requires. Some will weigh the produce and record donations themselves, while others will prefer that you give them receipts. All of this information can be gathered during a meeting with the food bank managers or over the phone. To keep this information organized, create a spread sheet with the survey information of all food banks on one page.

Building a relationship

Food banks rely heavily on volunteer support to run, and are often built on a tight knit community of volunteers and staff. To work well with these food banks it is important to try and incorporate your program into this community. A strong relationship with food banks can lead to benefits down the road that you might not have expected, such as donations of boxes, volunteer help, or connections to local growers. One of the easiest and most powerful ways to build this relationship is to give the food banks something they are always in need of - volunteer hours!

Volunteering at local food banks, even if it is just once, can have lasting benefits. Logistically it allows you to get a strong grasp on the location and layout of the food bank, which will come in handy later when dropping off food, or giving directions to others who are dropping off food for you. It can also give you hints about the demographics of the food banks, particularly size of distribution. This is very important when trying to decide how much food to send to which food banks. Second, it gives you a chance to get to know the volunteers and staff and a feel for their “business” culture. For example some food banks are a little more laid back, and communication and behavior is more informal. Other food banks might have more of a hierarchy, and stricter procedures. This kind of information may effect how you work with the food bank. Finally, volunteering reflects well on your dedication to your program in the food community.

Volunteering at the food bank is a particularly useful activity in the non-harvest season as it can give you activities to do when work slows down. This is also a great time to volunteer because food banks are usually overwhelmed during the Thanksgiving and Christmas distributions and are in greater need of volunteers.

Victory Gardens

Victory Gardens can be a great source of extra produce to local food banks. The main framework of a Victory Gardens program is that outreach is done to connect with local gardeners, who are told that they can donate food to their food banks. Then they are given information about where to drop off donations. It is good to have a contact who can be called, and tell them where the nearest food bank and/or drop off site is and when it is open. Thus, it is important when running this program that the main contact has a list of information on all the food banks and drop sites in the area. Putting this information on a brochure or online resource is useful. Victory Gardens are very similar and in many ways the same as a Plant A Row programs. Plant A Row programs specifically promotes gardeners to plant an extra row of food from their garden. Victory Gardens asks growers to donate any food they have in excess. In many cases though, this “extra” food was planted on purpose for the food bank. Thus, the names of these two types of programs are often interchangeable.

Methods of Outreach

Most suburban and rural areas have home gardeners who are willing to donate produce; the most difficult part of this program is simply reaching out to these gardeners and making them aware that they can donate. The main avenues for contacting home gardeners include, but are not limited to:

- ...► Garden/ agricultural events
- ...► Local garden groups
- ...► Garden Supply Stores

Gardening/Agricultural events

Attending an Event

This is a great way to interact with gardeners in your area. These events are usually announced in the local newspaper or online. When you find out about an event coming up, contact the organizer as soon as possible about being able to table at an event. Most event organizers will not charge you to table if you are a nonprofit and not a vendor.

Table Set Up

When tabling at event, you should have a way to attract people to your table to start a conversation. This can include:

- ...> Giveaways
- ...> Games
- ...> Interactive displays

For informational purposes you should also have:

- ...> Sign-up/pledge sheet
- ...> Information Pamphlets
- ...> Business Cards

Suggestion: The Victory Gardens program of SCCAA created a game to get people to the table. This included color pictures of different foods taped to card board to make games pieces, and other pieces that have names of the parts of the plant. To play the game you have to match up the picture of the food with the part of a plant it came from. To make it a challenge we included some challenging produce (like tomato = fruit, and broccoli = flower).

Creating Incentives

For gardener programs it is more difficult to provide incentives, so you have to be more creative. One great incentive is seeds or plant-start giveaways. These can be used in one of two ways.

- ...> As Part of a Pledge
 - ♦ You can give seed packets to those growers who pledge to try to donate food from their garden. The pledge sheet should include a space for contact information. This allows you to contact growers and remind them of their pledge, and at the end of the season check-in with them to see if they made any donations
- ...> To Spread Information
 - ♦ You can also simply hand out seed packets with information about the program pasted on them. When they go to plant the seeds they will be reminded of the program.

Procuring seeds to donate is actually easier than it sounds. Most seed growers want to get rid of last years seeds to make room for next year's inventory. The previous year's seeds are still viable, and perfectly good for planting. This means that the best time to contact seeds companies is in early winter, when they are trying to get rid of old stock. They should first be contacted with a letter, and then followed up with a phone call in a week.

Local Garden Groups

Local groups can be found both online and through extension offices. Contact the group leaders using the contact information you are given. Presentations are ideal because it gives a face to the program and allows you to answer questions. Make sure to have hard copies of all handouts, as most garden meetings are informal, and thus a PowerPoint presentation will be of no use.

Garden Supply Stores

Leaving flyers and or pamphlets at local supply stores is another way to reach local growers. It is best to go to the store ahead of time and see if they have an area where flyers or business cards are posted. Bring materials with you when you go and ask around about posting information.

Tracking Donations

Tracking donations from local growers can be a big challenge. You are limited to two options, asking the food banks or asking the growers. You will most likely get more accurate tracking if you use the food banks. You should meet with your local food banks and discuss what tracking method works best for them. Most food banks already need to track all the donations they receive, so it could be as simple as putting VG next to donations that are Victory Gardens. If this does not work, you can instead try to contact the growers who have pledged at the end of the season and ask them how much they have donated. These numbers will be less accurate.

Farmers Market Gleaning

Developing a Program

Farmers' markets can be a great source of gleaned produce. Growers often have goods that will not keep until the next market. By donating this food it saves them the time of repacking and transporting. Before starting to glean at a farmers market, make sure to contact the manager of the market and get their approval. When you first arrive at the market, go around to the different grower booths with materials about your program and talk to them about donating. Always approach growers when they have no customers, which is most likely at the very beginning of the market. It is ideal when working with a farmers market to have a limited number of volunteers who consistently glean. This helps develop a relationship of trust between the donors and the volunteers. Also, make sure to have a tracking system in place, as many donors will want a receipt at the end of the season so that they can use their donations as a tax deduction. The more consistent and well structured the glean, the easier it will be for the growers and volunteers, and thus the more successful for the program.

Food Recovery Program Structure

Farmers' markets are set at the same time and place every week, and more predictable than gleaning. This gives you the opportunity to create a consistent and well structured program. Such a system will make it easier for volunteers to glean, and train other volunteers. This structure should include:

- A specific food bank where food is dropped off, or which picks up food
- A source of boxes for the volunteers
- A method for exchanging materials

Food Bank

Suggestion: SCCAA gleaned from the local Down-Town Mount Vernon Farmers Market. There is a food bank nearby, and this was the destination of all food gleaned from the market. The farmers market is on a Saturday when the food bank is closed. After talking to the food bank we determined the best way to deal with this issue was to have a volunteer with a key to the food bank let our gleaning volunteers drop off food at the same time every week.

A Source of Boxes

Suggestion: The food bank itself was our source of boxes. After weighing and dropping off the food at the food bank, the gleaning volunteer took empty, unused boxes from the food bank and stored them in their car. Their car was big enough that they could keep them there without any interference.

A method for exchanging materials

Suggestion: At the beginning of the season the volunteer in charge was given all the papers they needed to track the food donations and their own hours for the whole season. At our office, there is a drop off box, so they were able to drop off these papers at the end of the market, even though the office was closed. This overall system saved volunteer time. Further, because the system is so clear, when volunteers switched off weeks, the original volunteer was able to train the new one in very little time. Another potential option is having the volunteer email you the data once a week.

References: 1. Wikipedia: Community Action Agencies. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_Action_Program>

Gleaning Resource Guide #10

At Thurston County Food Bank

BY AMERICORPS*VISTA DAVID MURPHY



Thurston County Food Bank (TCFB) is located in Olympia, Washington. Established by volunteers in 1965, TCFB has continued to grow since that time. TCFB utilizes about 30 volunteers each day it's open to food bank customers. Thurston County Food Bank has a large presence in our community serving 39,500 customers in 2010.

The current gleaning program began in 2009 with an AmeriCorps VISTA placement at TCFB. Previous to this, Olympia had a gleaning program independent from the food bank, but eventually the main volunteer departed and gleaning projects died. Our model is a centralized program with the gleaning coordinator organizing events, recruiting volunteers, and communicating with volunteers and farmers.

In addition to hosting the gleaning program, TCFB has launched a number of projects to improve its produce area including a winter community supported agriculture (CSA) program, a mini CSA program for children on free or reduced lunches at two elementary schools, a winter produce food drive at local grocers, a plant-a-row campaign, weekly work parties at the Kiwanis food bank gardens, and internships for students of The Evergreen State College focused on produce related programs.

Volunteer Relations

Outreach

The first thing to remember is volunteer recruitment is never done. Gleaning is physically demanding, subject to bad weather and intense during short harvest season. The vast majority of our volunteers will change from season to season. Our main volunteer demographic is 20 somethings who are often unemployed or underemployed. Many such volunteers work as many as 12-15 hours a week, but on finding a job cut back volunteering considerably or completely.

To compensate for these constraints the coordinator worked with The Evergreen State College, a school emphasizing community engagement, to enlist student interns. During spring quarter 2011, four part-time interns helped prepare the Kiwanis food bank gardens and school gardens for the season. Interns made vegetable information print-outs with cooking and storage directions for customers. In addition to official interns many students from Evergreen volunteer with our program.

Lessons Learned

- Internet classifieds are a major source of volunteer recruitment and Craigslist is the standout tool. Many volunteers who are between jobs or underemployed discovered our program through our Craigslist ads. My post was always titled, "Gleaning: Alleviate Hunger and Malnutrition." Postings expire after one week. Having images in your post of happy gleaners gets those potential volunteers excited. You'll probably have to edit your photos down to reduce their dimensions for uploading to Craigslist. Save time by saving your post as a document in a folder titled "Craigslist ad" with your edited gleaning pictures. I suggest identifying similar routine tasks and streamlining the process in a similar fashion as I described above.
- Encourage existing volunteers to tell their friends about the program. A volunteer sharing where they got those amazing heads of lettuce from will bolster group size.
- Tabling at volunteer events or events related to agriculture has provided some support. Often emails bounce back so you may want to write email addresses down yourself to avoid illegible handwriting.

Our first year gleaning coordinator made these observations regarding volunteers. "[Through various outreach methods] many potential volunteers expressed interest, mainly by email. The gleaning coordinator received about 8-9 inquiries about the gleaning

program each month. Approximately half of these people completed the application and orientation process and attended at least one gleaning event. About one quarter became frequent participants.” Don’t be discouraged if building a team of volunteers takes months.

Volunteer Intake:

When a potential gleaner expresses interest in the program, the coordinator asked him/her to drop by the food bank for an orientation, and to fill out intake paperwork. The intake paperwork consisted of the volunteer’s contact information, emergency information, and availability. The coordinator also asked volunteers to read and sign the TCFB’s volunteer policy and procedure paperwork, which mainly covers safety issues and customer confidentiality.

Lessons Learned

- When you receive an inquiry from a person who wants to volunteer, set an appointment with them for an orientation in the same encounter or email exchange. Eliminate the need for them to contact you again to get started volunteering.
- Don’t send people away with paperwork to fill out and bring back to you; have them fill it out at the orientation and turn it in the same day.
- Schedule your gleaning events to take place soon after the orientation. I had good luck having volunteers come in a half an hour before a gleaning event for the orientation. This strategy provides volunteers with a tour, description of the program, necessary paperwork, and a gleaning event all within the same day. In general, make sure to keep the process moving forward so you don’t lose the potential volunteer’s interest.
- Suggest they invite friends to come for an orientation. The more comfortable the volunteers feel the more positive their experience will be and the more likely they will continue gleaning

Volunteer Retention

Gleaning volunteers in our community are often short term. However, many do return as time permits. In ensuring that volunteers have a pleasant experience TCFB provides the following during a glean; food and drinks for events, while harvesting we play games, take breaks, and keep the atmosphere upbeat. We thank our volunteers after each glean and provide detailed information about weekly and monthly totals.

Lessons Learned:

- Sometimes you get a problem volunteer. I suggest talking with them directly rather than “misplacing” their email address or phone number. If they are making you or other volunteers uncomfortable, explain the situation to them and what appropriate behavior is expected.

Volunteer Demographics

- People underemployed or unemployed often stop gleaning once they find work.
- Students doing internships
- Students, often with their parents, during summer vacation
- Members of local churches (often retired)
- Other retirees

Agricultural Donors Relations

Thurston County Food Bank is set to glean between 40-50 thousand pounds of produce during 2011. We work primarily with six growers (5 small scale commercial farms and 1 service club who grows solely for the food bank). In TCFB’s experience, gleaning programs don’t need many donors, but rather key donors. TCFB currently has set gleaning days scheduled with several farms. Having a set schedule is easier on the farmer, the coordinator, and volunteers.

- Not all donors are the same. Let sites know that they have a variety of ways to donate. Find the right method for the

right farm and help make the process as simple as possible for them.

- ♦ Farm gleaning: Volunteers harvest produce from fields or orchards.
 - ♦ Cull gleaning: Some farms don't want gleaners in their fields. Instead they will let you glean their culls or products coming back from market. TCFB cull gleans directly from farms. We do not cull glean at farmers markets because other organizations already use the produce.
 - ♦ Cull gleaning is very efficient if the amount of food is large, because it only takes one to two people an hour or two to get in excess of six hundred pounds of high quality produce.
 - ♦ Farm drop-offs: Other farms will harvest and bring culled produce directly to the food bank. We don't count that in our gleaning numbers, but who could ask for a more efficient system?
- Be consistent with donors. If you say you are going to do something or be somewhere, keep your word. Keeping donors happy is the most important aspect of a gleaning program. If TCFB lost one of our major donors, we could miss out on as much as 10,000 lbs of high quality produce a year.

TCFB has organized over 80 events this year. The gleaning coordinator, or another paid staff person, has attended every event excluding two. This is to ensure the donor's property is not damaged and only specified rows of crops are harvested. Volunteers can easily make mistakes that can become deal breakers for growers. Be specific with volunteers and be mindful of their work.

Visibility:

1. Target your audience. Who makes up your gleaning volunteers? At TCFB our main demographic is younger people who are concerned about the environment, sustainability, and eating organic. This demographic also tends to be in better physical health and are able to do the physically demanding and repetitive work of harvesting. Speak to colleges and high schools, and when putting up fliers, target areas that are frequented by younger people.
2. Fine tune your pitch for specific audiences.
3. Speaking in the media or writing on community blogs is a great way to attract attention to your program. Often during gleaning presentations TCFB's gleaning coordinator has used such media as a way to highlight other key features about our organization. Maybe you don't expect to get a lot of gleaners from a presentation, but if you're present to the Master Gardeners you can educate them about your plant a row campaign and how personal donations of home-grown fruits and vegetables are always welcome at the food bank.
4. If you have a program that allows volunteers to receive a portion of the harvest ask them to tell their friends. People enjoy gleaning because it helps their community, they work in scenic agricultural areas, they are compensated with high quality food, and they help reduce waste.

Plant Start Distribution

Thurston County Food Bank distributed thousands of plant starts during spring and early summer of 2011. Other TCFB programs like the school garden project have plant starts grown for them, but the gleaning program received excess donations from growers. Use this opportunity to introduce yourself to potential donors.

1. Contact both existing and new agricultural donors early in the season. Tell them that your organization accepts plant starts. Let farmers know they are eligible for a tax deductible receipt when donating to a 501(c)3.
2. Check in several times with growers during spring and early summer. Often growers are excited that the excess starts are not going to waste and enjoy the reminder.
3. When you pick up the starts talk about your gleaning project and how they can get involved.
4. Be sure to water the plants at least every couple of days. Water in the evening so they are not wet during distribution.
5. Create informational sheets on the specific plant's needs like soil type, amount of sun, water, fertilizer, and planting instructions. Also include information on when the plant is ready for harvest. Optionally you could put up a sign with the name of the donor's business as a way of recognizing them.
6. The starts should be the last thing the customers receive before leaving the food bank so they are not damaged through the process of going through the line.

Building Strategic Partnerships

Networking in your community allows mutually beneficial partnerships and often increases your ability to meet customer needs.

- ...➤ Assess potential resources for volunteers.
 - ♦ Identify organizations and institutions in your area. Do they already do volunteer work? Hunger relief is an easy sell to organizations. When you tack on the added benefit of waste reduction it is even more enticing to environmentally conscious groups. If your organization allows volunteers to keep part of the harvested goods then many more (especially low-income) people will be interested.
 - ♦ Do you have universities, community colleges, or high schools where students need internships or community service hours? Would an entire class be willing to come volunteer for an afternoon or several? If an event goes well try to increase the commitment to an annual event or a series of events.
 - ♦ Contact your religious communities. Charitable work is a major focus of faith communities and their members are often long-term residents of a community. Faith communities can also attract younger members by highlighting their involvement in projects that have social and environmental justice as their focus.
- ...➤ Contact organizations.
 - ♦ Meeting in person with contacts from an organization is ideal. If the season has already started or you don't have time to meet with a couple dozen churches, schools, and businesses then creating a short but informative email about your program is a useful tool.

Starting a New Gleaning Program

1. Take a volunteer management class, at least a full day in length, before you start putting your program together.
2. Assess the following:
 - ♦ Your organization's ability to store fresh produce (How much can you bring in and how often? How are you going to train staff or volunteers on proper storage techniques?)
 - ♦ Customer needs. What types of produce do they want? Are you going to show them or provide them with information on how to use crops they are unfamiliar with preparing?
 - ♦ Where are your volunteers likely to come from?
 - ♦ What vehicles, tools, and supplies will you need?
3. Eliminate as many in-between steps to getting your donors and volunteers in place as possible. From the moment they express interest, keep the ball rolling until they are engaged and committed.
4. Use existing relationships to your advantage. If you don't know farmers yourself, take someone with you who does when you scout for donors. If you have personal friends who like gardening and agriculture, get them to come glean with you.
5. Research the crops you'll be working with before you start gleaning. Don't be caught uncertain whether or not to harvest something. For example: can kale be harvested after a freeze? Can plums be picked while they are under ripe? Is it OK to harvest green potatoes? Knowing these things ahead of time will make a huge difference in how productive your gleaning events are.
6. When possible, schedule gleaning to begin mid-morning, so volunteers don't have to choose between sleeping-in and participating.
7. Find key organizations that can provide volunteers during the peak months and establish ongoing relationships with them.

Resources

Below are some of our favorite tools. Categories include: advocacy: state & federal, board development, desktop tools, emergency food provision, food safety & nutrition, fundraising, information on hunger, marketing, organizational strength & capacity, other service providers, technology, and volunteer management.

These resources, along with new ones that are added on a regular basis, can be found on the Washington Food Coalition website.

Advocacy

Federal

[Bread for the World](http://www.bread.org), nationwide Christian movement that seeks justice for the world's hungry people by lobbying our nation's decisionmakers. <http://www.bread.org>

[Center on Budget & Policy Priorities](http://www.cbpp.org), organization working at the federal and state levels on fiscal policy and public programs that affect low- and moderate-income families and individuals. <http://www.cbpp.org>

[Coalition on Human Needs](http://www.chn.org), alliance of national organizations working to promote public policies that address the needs of low-income and other vulnerable people. <http://www.chn.org>

[Community Food Security Coalition](http://www.foodsecurity.org), coalition of North American organizations, dedicated to building strong, sustainable, local and regional food systems that ensure access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for all people at all times. <http://www.foodsecurity.org>

[Food Research and Action Center](http://www.frac.org), national nonprofit working to improve public policies and public-private partnerships to eradicate hunger and under nutrition in the United States. <http://www.frac.org>

State

[Children's Alliance](http://www.childrensalliance.org), Washington's statewide child advocacy organization. <http://www.childrensalliance.org>

[Policy Watch](http://www.washingtonpolicywatch.org), bulletin about issues and events in Olympia during the state legislative session. Provides information but does not take positions. <http://www.washingtonpolicywatch.org>

[Statewide Poverty Action Network](http://www.povertyaction.org), works to eliminate the root causes of poverty in Washington, organizing social action and influencing decisions in the state capitol. <http://www.povertyaction.org>

[Washington State Budget and Policy Center](http://www.budgetandpolicy.org), provides credible, independent and accessible information and analyses of state fiscal issues with particular attention to the impacts on low and moderate-income persons. <http://www.budgetandpolicy.org>

[Knowledge As Power](http://www.knowledgeaspower.org/), A small but mighty non-profit, KAP is a 501c3 organization based in Seattle. Their primary objective is to empower politically engaged citizens. If you care about an issue or a bill, they want to help you influence it. <http://www.knowledgeaspower.org/>

Board Development:

[Board Café](http://www.compasspoint.org/board-café-home), a monthly enewsletter that offers tips for board members, <http://www.compasspoint.org/board-café-home>

[BoardSource](http://www.boardsource.org), offers tools to help build an effective nonprofit board. <http://www.boardsource.org>

[United Way of King County](http://www.uwkc.org/partner-with-us/nonprofits/governance/), nonprofit resources page featuring downloadable forms for board assessment, board composition analysis and more. <http://www.uwkc.org/partner-with-us/nonprofits/governance/>

Desktop Tools:

Washington Connection, excellent online service to screen customers for eligibility in multiple programs-save this link to screen all customers! www.washingtonconnection.org

Babblefish, listing of online language translators. babblefish.com

Meet-O-Matic, propose and schedule meetings online and invite participants using your own email system, then monitor responses. <http://www.meetomatic.com>

Merriam-Webster, dictionary and thesaurus with audio pronunciation. <http://www.m-w.com>

Emergency Food Provision How-To's:

Resources on For Meal Programs: A number of helpful tools from Meals Partnership Coalition. <http://www.mealspartnership.org/>

Planning for Summer Meals 2011, "A Resource Toolkit for Communities Across Washington by Parent Help 123 (a program of Within Reach). <http://parenthelp123.org/professionals/food-resources/summer-meals-resource-toolkit>

Charity Food Programs That Can End Hunger In America, by John Arnold, Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank of West Michigan, 2004 <http://www.feedingamericawestmichigan.org/foodforthought/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/wnwn.pdf>

"Hungering for Disaster Preparedness: Strategies, Resources and Tips for Food Pantries and Their Coalitions," available on the web at <http://www.hungercenter.org/publications/hungering-for-disaster-preparedness-strategies-resources-and-tips-for-food-pantries-and-their-coalitions/>

Serving Up Justice: How to Design an Emergency Feeding Program and Build Community Food Security, by Caroline Fanning and Lani M'cleod, available from WhyHunger, 212-629-8850. <http://www.whyhunger.org/>

Washington Food Coalition, offers technical assistance to emergency food providers in Washington State. 1-877-729-0501 or 206-729-0501, <http://www.wafoodcoalition.org>

Food Safety & Nutrition:

Food Service Rule, guide to food safety standards from the Washington Department of Health. <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/food/rule.html>

TEFAP Commodity Fact Sheets and Recipes, http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/tefap/cfs_tefap.htm

USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline, Food safety questions? They have answers. 1-888-674-6854, http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Safety_Education/usda_meat_&_poultry_hotline/index.asp

WSU Extension Nutrition Education, programs offered to help Washington residents make healthier food choices, extend their food resources, manage their diabetes to live a healthier life and handle food safely to keep their families well. <http://nutrition.wsu.edu>

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-ED) Program's Resource Link page, provides a comprehensive list of resources in diverse categories. <http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/snap-ed/Resources/default.htm>

Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservation (FDPIR), federal commodity food program home page features lots of resources including commodity fact sheets and recipes. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/fdpir/>

Fundraising:

[Foundation Center](http://www.foundationcenter.org), features information and resources on grants, catalogue of nonprofit literature, and search for funders in your area. <http://www.foundationcenter.org>

[The Grassroots Fundraising Journal](http://www.grassrootsfundraising.org) (GIFT), fundraising tips and tools. 1-888-458-8588, <http://www.grassrootsfundraising.org>

[How to Succeed in Fundraising](http://www.LewisCullman.com) by Really Trying, tips from philanthropist Lewis B. Cullman on how to execute a fundraising campaign. Witty and brief, available at <http://www.LewisCullman.com>.

[Feinstein Foundation](http://www.feinsteinfoundation.org), has given away \$1 million each spring for the past ten years to hunger fighting agencies as part of its National Challenge. <http://www.feinsteinfoundation.org>

[MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger](http://www.mazon.org), national nonprofit agency that allocates funding to prevent and alleviate hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds. <http://www.mazon.org>

[Northwest Development Officers Association](http://www.ndoa.org) (NDOA), provides comprehensive training opportunities and support for nonprofit fundraisers. <http://www.ndoa.org>

[Philanthropy Northwest](http://www.philanthropynw.org), association that promotes effectiveness in philanthropy. The 'Looking for a Grant?' page features tips and resources for grant-seekers. <http://www.philanthropynw.org>

[Potlatch Foundation](http://www.potlatchfund.org), a Native-led grant-making foundation and leadership development organization offering culturally appropriate training and technical assistance to build the capacity of grantmakers, Tribes, Native groups, and other Native grant seekers in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Western Montana. www.potlatchfund.org

[Mt. Rainier Coffee Co.](http://www.mtrainiercoffee.com/), Mount Rainier Coffee Company is proud to partner with non-profit organizations that make an impact on our communities. <http://www.mtrainiercoffee.com/>

Information on Hunger & Food Security Initiatives:

[WhyHunger](http://www.whyhunger.org), is a national and international leader in the fight against hunger and poverty, with an emphasis on supporting grassroots organizations. <http://www.whyhunger.org>

[Feeding America](http://feedingamerica.org/) — The Nation's Food Bank Network, the largest charitable domestic hunger-relief organization in the country. Works through a nationwide network of distribution centers. Provides information and statistics about hunger and foodbanking. <http://feedingamerica.org/>

Marketing

[Food Stamp Program Photo Gallery](http://foodstamp.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/photo_gallery.php), offers free photographs for use in communicating Program nutrition education and outreach messages. http://foodstamp.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/photo_gallery.php

[Smart Chart](http://www.smartchart.org), a planning tool which helps nonprofits develop high-impact communications strategies. <http://www.smartchart.org>

[Stock.XCHNG](http://www.sxc.hu), one of the leading free stock photography sites on the web with over 200,000 photos by more than 15,000 photographers. <http://www.sxc.hu>:

Organizational Strength & Capacity:

[CompassPoint Nonprofit Services](http://www.compasspoint.org), includes a resources directory, featuring the Nonprofit Genie FAQ section with everything from board development to federal form 990 to volunteer management. <http://www.compasspoint.org>

[Free Management Library](http://www.managementhelp.org), online library with over 75 searchable topics on activities necessary to plan, organize, lead, and coordinate activities in an organization. <http://www.managementhelp.org>

[Fieldstone Alliance](http://www.fieldstonealliance.org), practical nonprofit publications on a range of management and community organizing topics. www.fieldstonealliance.org

[IKNOW, Interactive Knowledge for Nonprofit Organizations](http://www.iknow.org) Worldwide, a clearinghouse for links to websites containing nonprofit information. <http://www.iknow.org>

[Innovation Network](http://www.innonet.org), national organization offering web-based tools and program planning, with some resources available for free to those who register. www.innonet.org

[Kellogg Foundation](http://www.wkkf.org), offers toolkits on communication, evaluation, and policy, and a host of other free publications. <http://www.wkkf.org>

[Nonprofit Facilities Financing](http://www.wshfc.org), program of the Washington State Housing Finance Commission (WSHFC), helps organizations access below-market rate interest loans – through bonds – to fund a wide variety of projects. 1-800-767-4663, <http://www.wshfc.org>

[Third Sector New England](http://www.tsne.org), provides support, training and management resources to strengthen individual nonprofit organizations and to build the capacity of the nonprofit community. Visit the Articles page in the Resources section. www.tsne.org

Risk Management & Disaster Preparedness:

[Alliance of Nonprofits for Insurance](http://www.ani-rrg.org/), Risk Retention Group, publishes a number of free guides to risk management and under-standing your insurance needs, for example, developing a vehicle safety program and appropriate policies, <http://www.ani-rrg.org/>

[3 Days, 3 Ways](http://www.govlink.org/3days3ways), public motivation campaign sponsored by the King County Office of Emergency Management to help individuals, families, and communities prepare for emergencies and disasters. <http://www.govlink.org/3days3ways>

[Washington Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster](http://www.wavoad.org), WAVOAD, works within the state to improve responses to disaster situations through collaboration among its members. (360) 479-5176, <http://www.wavoad.org>

Other Services & Providers:

[Columbia Legal Services](http://www.columbialegal.org), nonprofit organization employing lawyers and legal workers who provide legal assistance to low-income and special needs people and organizations in Washington. <http://www.columbialegal.org>

[Community Voice Mail](http://www.cvm.org), makes a phone number with voice mail possible for thousands of people each year. <http://www.cvm.org>

[Washington Attorneys Assisting Community Organizations](http://www.waaco.org), connects nonprofit organizations statewide with free business legal counsel through volunteer attorneys. <http://www.waaco.org>

[WithinReach](http://www.withinreachwa.org), statewide organization providing resources for maternal, child, and family health. Operates several toll-free information and referral lines. <http://www.withinreachwa.org>

[Citrine Health](http://www.citrinehealth.org), Citrine Health is a non-profit agency in Snohomish County that helps individuals and families apply for food assistance and state health insurance programs over the phone and in person.www.citrinehealth.org

Technology:

[Tech Soup](http://www.techsoup.org), a nonprofit technical support organization that offers nearly free software by some of the biggest companies and provides a monthly update with tips. <http://www.techsoup.org>

[NPower](http://www.npower.org), technology-related technical assistance for nonprofits, including classes and online technology assessment and planning tools, <http://www.npower.org>

[Del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us/), social bookmarks manager which allows you to save and access bookmarked websites from any web connection. <http://del.icio.us/>

[Ebase](http://www.ebase.org), free database program, designed specifically for non-profits by nonprofits. www.ebase.org

[Idealware](http://www.idealware.org), free candid Consumer-Reports-style reviews and articles about software of interest to nonprofits. www.idealware.org

[Survey Monkey](http://www.surveymonkey.com), create professional online surveys quickly and easily, free for small surveys. <http://www.surveymonkey.com>

Volunteer Management:

[Idealist](http://www.idealist.org), a comprehensive networking site for nonprofit organizations and volunteers. www.idealist.org

[National Volunteer Week](http://www.pointsoflight.org), typically in April, is a great time to recognize and show appreciation for volunteers. www.pointsoflight.org

Congressional Hunger Center, non-profit anti-hunger leadership training organization located in Washington , DC . The Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellows Program places participants with local hunger-fighting organizations around the country for 6 months. www.hungercenter.org

[Volunteer Match](http://www.volunteermatch.org), a leading website for connecting volunteers and nonprofit volunteer opportunities,www.volunteermatch.org. Craig's List is also a good place to list, <http://geo.craigslist.org/iso/us/wa>, and your local United Way may also assist with volunteer recruitment.

[Volunteer Resource](http://www.pointsoflight.org), library of resources and effective practices on volunteering and volunteer management. <http://www.pointsoflight.org>

The ABC's of Emergency Food Provision in Washington State

This is a list of the most commonly used acronyms we hear. It is not meant to be exhaustive. We welcome additions. This list was adapted from a Seattle Food Committee publication. If you would like to “steal” this document, please simply contact the WFC office.

- ♦ **First Harvest:** Rotary First Harvest, conduit between farmers and emergency food system
- ♦ **2nd Harvest:** 2nd Harvest Inland Northwest, Eastern WA food distribution center, Feeding America member
- ♦ **AHNC:** Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition, statewide advocacy coalition
- ♦ **CA:** Children's Alliance, statewide children's advocacy organization
- ♦ **CAN:** Children's Action Network (Children's Alliance), web advocacy alert system
- ♦ **CFNP:** Community Food & Nutrition Program, federal funding
- ♦ **CSFP:** Commodity Supplemental Food Program, federal nutrition program
- ♦ **DOH:** Department of Health
- ♦ **EFAP:** Emergency Food Assistance Program, state funding for food banks and tribal food voucher programs
- ♦ **EFN:** Emergency Food Network, Pierce County food distribution center
- ♦ **FEMA:** Federal Emergency Management Agency, federal agency
- ♦ **FLL:** Food Lifeline, Western WA food distribution center, Feeding America member
- ♦ **FRAC:** Food Research & Action Center, national anti-hunger non-profit
- ♦ **MPC:** Meals Partnership Coalition, Seattle-based coalition of meal programs
- ♦ **OFB:** Oregon Food Bank, Portland-based food distribution center, Feeding America member
- ♦ **NWH:** Northwest Harvest, statewide hunger relief organization
- ♦ **SFC:** Seattle Food Committee, Seattle coalition of food banks
- ♦ **TEFAP:** The Emergency Food Assistance Program, federal commodities program
- ♦ **VOA:** Volunteers of America, national non-profit with local members
- ♦ **WIC:** Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, federal nutrition program
- ♦ **WFC:** Washington Food Coalition, statewide coalition of emergency food providers
- ♦ **WRAHC:** Western Region Anti-Hunger Consortium, regional anti-hunger consortium
- ♦ **WSDA FAP:** Washington State Department of Agriculture Food Assistance Programs
- ♦ **WSFNC:** Washington State Food & Nutrition Coalition, statewide coalition

Glossary

Commodities: foods provided by the United States government at no charge to qualifying citizens.

Distribution center: an agency that collects, warehouses, and distributes food to emergency food programs and other charities on a regional, county, or statewide basis.

Emergency food: food that is given to individuals who do not have the means to acquire that food themselves, typically from either a food bank or meal program.

Emergency food provider: an individual who works or volunteers at a food bank, food pantry, meal program, or distribution center. EFAP Lead agency: A Contractor that may subcontract with one or more local food banks to provide emergency food assistance to individuals, and with distribution centers to provide emergency food to food banks.

Food bank: An emergency food assistance program that distributes unprepared food without charge to its customers, is open a fixed number of hours and days each week or month, and such hours and days are publicly posted.

Food pantry: In Washington, this term is synonymous with “food bank.”

Gleaning: the practice of gathering the extra crops that are left in the fields after a harvest. Food Rescue refers to the collection of perishable or prepared foods from wholesale and/or retail sources, such as supermarkets and restaurants. These two methods of collection put food to use that would otherwise be wasted. (WHY Hunger).

Meal program: those programs which serve meals to the general public at no charge as a means of ensuring that they are not hungry.

Got a Good Idea?

Washington Food Coalition would welcome the chance to hear from you!

Just call or write.

Washington Food Coalition is a member-based statewide coalition of emergency food providers.

*To learn more about membership, visit us online at www.wafoodcoalition.org or call us at 1-877-729-0501.
Contact information for all WFC members is available at our online member community portal at wafoodcoalition.org*